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The Necessity of Gangster Capitalism: Primitive Accumulation in Russia and China
Nancy Holmstrom and Richard Smith

Overcoming Racism
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Kosovo and "the Jewish Question"
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Remembering Murray Levin
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Subversion and Scholarship
by Robert Engler

More Than Entertainment
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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Isaac Deutscher once said that, in dealing with some questions, Marxists have to wear gloves. If memory serves, he was talking particularly about the nationalisms of the oppressed.

The "national question" has, of course, always been a thorny subject for socialists and a major bone of contention among leading Marxist theorists. But the most serious engagements with the national question, the most substantive debates among socialists, happened a long time ago and in response to very different historical conditions from the ones we're living in today. Much of the discussion happened at a time when the history of ethnic nationalism had barely begun. Today, we have many decades more of ethnic/national conflict to look back on. Although we live in a "globalized" world where the nation-state is supposed to be in decline, there's never been a time when the world has come face-to-face more dramatically with the destructive consequences of ethnic-national divisions. Yet we've hardly begun to address

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The Necessity of Gangster Capitalism: Primitive Accumulation in Russia and China

by Nancy Holmstrom and Richard Smith

The Russian bank laundering scandal in the newspapers last fall is only the latest installment in the ongoing saga of corruption coming out of the former Soviet Union. The more important question is: where did they get the money in the first place? How, for example, did the former Premier of the Ukraine manage to buy a seven million dollar mansion in Marin County, California, on his official salary of a few thousand dollars a year? The answer is only too apparent: Moscow's gangster rule has become so well known that the term "Mafia" has lost its exclusively Italian connotation. China is not much better. Ten years after the Tiananmen Square demonstrations were called to protest official corruption, corruption is still the

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"Number 1 Complaint" of Chinese today, according to a recent headline in the *New York Times*. Western economic experts, who were the architects of the former communist countries' transition to market economies, have expressed shock and disappointment at the extent of corruption, criminality, and social collapse that have accompanied the market reforms they prescribed. As one U.S. Treasury official complained, "We had a belief that the first generation of Russian capitalists would be nice guys, but they are ruthless motherfuckers."

We will argue here that the reason Western economists were surprised by these outcomes is because they relied on a historical-fantasy-world, neoliberal model of capitalism. The emergence of gangster capitalism and wholesale corruption in the former Soviet bloc and China should have been entirely predictable to anyone familiar with the historical orgins of capitalism in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere, and to anyone with a passing familiarity with Marx's account of "primitive accumulation." After a brief review of Marx on the orgins of capitalism, we will consider the theory's current usefulness as an aid to understanding what is happening in Russia and China today.

The Secret of Primitive Accumulation

Towards the end of volume one of *Capital*, in a chapter called "The Secret of Primitive Accumulation," Marx raises the question of how the process of capitalist accumulation got started in the first place. Though markets existed from antiquity, capitalism as a social productive system did not really emerge until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, first in England. This system which, unlike all previous historical modes of production, was based on generalized production for market, and depended on the predominance of two kinds of commodity producers/sellers: on the one hand, a class of capitalists vested with a virtual monopoly of the ownership of the means of production and, on the other hand, a propertyless proletariat dispossessed of the means of production and subsistence and, consequently, with nothing to sell but their capacity to labor. The emergence of these two great social classes was the

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indispensable condition for the operation and development of capitalist production. "Capital," Marx was keen to emphasize, is not just money; it is this unique social relationship. So if one wants to understand the origins of capitalism, one has to understand how these these two great classes came onto the historical stage in the first place. Mainstream economists of Marx's day relied upon a "Just So" story of how the diligent, intelligent, and frugal people accumulated wealth, while the other, lazy rascals, lost theirs. Dismissing this myth as "insipid childishness" in defense of (stolen) property, Marx argued that primitive accumulation is nothing but the "historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production." In early Europe, the producers had to be freed from feudal bonds, but they also had to be "freed " from possession of any means of subsistence—access to land and any feudal guarantees of survival. In England, the first capitalist nation, an alliance of landlords, nascent capitalist farmers, and the state waged a centuries-long campaign to privatize farms and commons traditionally held by peasant collectivities. England's peasants were forcibly evicted from their farms by a series of enclosure movements from the fifteenth century through the nineteenth century, and thereby came to be wholly dependent on the market for the satisfaction of their needs. By seizing these lands and thus securing a virtual monopoly of the agrarian means of production, England's nascent agrarian bourgeoisie established the conditions for the normal operation of capitalist production, i.e., for the systematic exploitation of wage labor. This institution was greatly facilitated by the English state, which enacted harsh vagrancy laws (the "bloody legislation against the expropriated") to compel the newly propertyless proletariat to take up wage labor or be forced to labor in workhouses. Marx sums up this process of primitive accumulation by noting that: "In actual history it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great part."

Today, we are witnessing a similar process throughout the post-Communist world carried out under the banner of "market reform." Indeed, this modern version of primitive accumu-

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lation in Russia, Eastern Europe, and China amounts to the greatest enclosure movement in history—virtually a continent-wide drive to privatize state-collective property, far surpassing in scope the historic enclosure movements. And, as in the past, this process is hothousing the emergence of a class of newly rich capitalists, side-by-side with growing millions of unemployed and starving. No one can forsee the end result of this struggle to create the social property foundations of capitalism, but what is certain is that economic depression, social polarization, corruption, and class struggle are going to increase. Today, as yesterday, the process of primitive accumulation is not a pretty one.

Harvard's Best and Brightest "Do Russia"

Russia's descent into gangster capitalism began in the early 1990s when Russian market reformers attempted to introduce capitalism in one fell swoop—on the advice of Western advisors, particularly Harvard University "shock therapist," Professor Jeffrey Sachs and his capitalist provocateurs at the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID). In 1990 and 1991, as Gorbachev's reform program stalled and his government was collapsing, Sachs and his Institute colleagues advised Yegor Gaidar, Yeltsin's first economic czar, to dismantle quickly most of the controls and subsidies that had structured life for Soviet citizens for most of the century. Sachs predicted a more or less smooth transition to a normal western-style capitalism, once the initial shock of price decontrol was over. In the early nineties, Dr. Sachs bragged about how his prescriptive shock therapy had cured Bolivia's hyperinflation *in nine days*. Eastern Europe's and Russia's reform, he allowed, might take longer. Sachs could think this because, like most mainstream economists, he has a completely ahistorical understanding of economics. Like Adam Smith, Sachs believes that the "propensity to truck and barter" is built into human nature. So he supposed the transition to capitalism would be a natural, virtually automatic economic process: start by abandoning state planning, free up prices, promote private competition with state-owned industry, and sell off state industry as fast as

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possible—and economic growth and prosperity would follow. As he wrote in 1990:

> All this [shock therapy] will reduce real wages sharply in 1990, by 20% or so relative to 1989. That is a brave step. But this decline will not mean an equivalent decline in actual living standards. These will in fact fall much less sharply, bolstered by the end of shortages and the end of the 'inflation tax' now eating away at households' cash balances, genuine gains not reflected in the real wage indexes.[1]

The crucial thing, Sachs stressed, was not to waste time on half measures or hopeless "third ways" such as a "chimerical market socialism" but to force the transition to a western-style market economy as fast as possible. So Gaidar and his successor, Anatoly Chubais, wasted no time and went "all the way." Russia got the shock: On January 2, 1992, price controls were lifted on 90 percent of traded goods, and by the end of 1994, three-quarters of Russia's medium-sized and large-scale industrial enterprises had been privatized—"sold" off (stolen, would be a more accurate description) to management, underworld gangsters and the like—and the private sector produced 62 percent of Russia's officially reported gross domestic product (GDP).

The Demodernization of Russia

The result was an unmitigated disaster. In the first year of reform, industrial output collapsed by 26 percent. Between 1992 and 1995, Russia's GDP fell 42 percent and industrial production fell 46 percent—far worse than the contraction of the U.S. economy during the Great Depression. Worse, *pace* Dr. Sachs, it has yet to recover. Since 1989, the Russian economy has halved in size, and continues to drop. Real incomes have plummeted 40 percent since 1991; 80 percent of Russians now have no savings. The Russian government, bankrupted by the collapse of economic activity, stopped paying the salaries of millions of employees and dependents. Unemployment soared, particularly among women. By the mid to late nineties, more than forty-four million of Russia's 148 million people were living in poverty (defined as living on less than thirty-two dollars per month); three quarters of the population live on

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less than one hundred dollars per month. Suicides doubled and deaths from alcohol abuse tripled in the mid-nineties. Infant mortality reached third-world levels while the birthrate plummeted. After five years of reform, life expectancy fell by two years (to seventy-two) for women and by four years (to fifty-eight) for men—lower than a century ago for the latter. Currently, deaths so greatly exceed births that the Russian population is falling by about one million per year. If these trends continue, in the next thirty years Russia's population is expected to fall from 147 million to 123 million—a demographic collapse not seen since the Second World War.[2]

"Economic reform" has also brought the mass abandonment of children. By the end of 1998, at least two million Russian children were orphaned—more than at the end of the Second World War—and only about 650,000 live in orphanages. The rest were homeless. A year after leaving orphanages, one in three becomes an alcoholic, one in ten commits suicide. In what was once the second industrial power in the world—where schools turned out far more scientists and engineers per year than the United States—ten million children currently do not attend school.

This human catastrophe, which mainstream economists call "bumps on the road to a market economy" is more accurately summed up by Professor Stephen Cohen of New York University as the "endless collapse of everything essential to a decent existence." It is also the process of creation of a true Russian proletariat. Under communism, Russian workers certainly did not own the means of production, but they did, and many still do, in a real sense "own" their jobs. They had long-established rights to housing, state-provided medical care, childcare, and numerous subsidies from the state. These social property rights are being destroyed in the process of transition to a "normal" market economy. Divested, "freed" from control, possession, or ownership of means of production, the majority of people of the former Soviet Union are forced to come to the market with, in Marx's words, "nothing to sell but their skins." Though probably more than they bargained for, the architects of the transition insist that a certain degree of pain

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was unavoidable, at least in the short run, in order to give Sachs' "New Russian" entrepreneurs the freedom to remake the economy, thereby opening the way to greater prosperity for all. Let us turn now to the new entrepreneurs, the other great class of capitalism.

The Role of Force and Violence in the Institution of Capitalism

Sachs' reforms gave the "New Russian" entrepreneurs their freedom, to be sure. But instead of investments rationalizing the economy along capitalist lines, Russia's new bourgeoisie just plunged into a hellish free-for-all of "grabification"—a brutal struggle to steal everything they could get their hands on. They plundered the nation's wealth of natural resources, sold state-owned gold, diamonds, oil, gas, Siberian forests, even plutonium, and unloaded them on the West to amass their private fortunes. And, as we've seen in the money-laundering scandals of late, they also privatized billions of dollars of western aid.

Instead of plowing their stolen wealth into productivity-enhancing investments, as Sachs' reformers had hoped, they have, for the most part, just socked their loot away in secret western bank accounts or squandered it on yachts and villas on the French Riviera. By the mid-nineties, Russia's red bourgeoisie had stashed more than 150 billion dollars in foreign bank accounts, investments, and properties. At home, they've "invested" in furs, limousines, and high living. And they've hired private armies of gun thugs to defend their stolen wealth and possessions (from each other). But this is only until, as the Thatcherite *Economist* frankly acknowledged, the "legitimacy" of these stolen properties can be ratified by compliant governments—as were the enclosures in England or the vast land grabs in the nineteenth-century United States.

In 1994, a U.S. Treasury official told journalist Seymour Hersh that U.S. shock therapists failed "to anticipate fully the viciousness and rapaciousness" of Russia's new mafioso capitalists: "Much worse than the American robber barons. These guys take the fillings out of teeth after murder. It's a nightmare."[3] Sachs explains these unhappy results by blaming the

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political culture of the old Communist regime. But this cannot be a sufficient explanation for the wholesale plunder brought on by the transition to capitalism throughout the post-Communist world. The main reason is that capitalism as a social system *requires* such a one-time wholesale expropriation of social property.

Why? Because capitalism requires capitalists, a class of people vested with an effective monopoly ownership of the means of production. But as Sachs himself points out, prior to 1989, Russia's industries, mines, and natural resources "were nominally owned by the state and thus by nobody." The nomenklatura collectively monopolized control of the means of production but they did not own them privately. The class had to be created. Sachs' protocols for the transition contain no discussions of robber barons or gangster capitalists. Fetishizing an abstract ahistorical model, Sachs imagined that once prices were freed, once private enterprise was legally permitted, "capitalists" would somehow appear, stride forth, and take command of the economy. But where were these capitalists to come from? In 1990, no one in Eastern Europe or Russia had significant monetary wealth or private property in the industrial means of production. There was no bourgeoisie—not even a pre-revolutionary bourgeoisie to give the economy back to. As the joke went in Poland, "What were they to do—give the Lenin shipyard back to the Lenin family?" So no one had the means to buy the factories, the mines, the forests, the collective farms, or to hire labor. That's why they all feared that western investors would just come in, buy up everything, and take over the whole economy.

So who were the capitalists, the "New Russian" entrepreneurs, supposed to be? Sachs was quick to rule out the workers: "[T]he overriding aim should be to transform state enterprises into private corporations, with transferable ownership shares, rather than, say, into cooperatives or firms self-managed by their workers." Sachs also insisted that "[T]he government must ... stop managers walking away with state property."

If not the workers and not the managers, who would become the capitalists, the owners of the private corporations? How

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could the reformers go "all the way" to set up a "western-style" capitalism without capitalists? To set up the basis for "normal" capitalist accumulation, they needed to carry out "primitive accumulation"—capitalists had to be *created.* Individuals had to take possession, privatize property, factories, mines, wells, and forests. But since no one had the money to buy these state properties from the government, there was no feasible way this privatization could be done *legally, legitimately,* or *morally.* And given Sachs' insistence on the need for speed in the transition, there was no time for a native capitalist class of small entrepreneurs to grow up over decades or centuries into large corporations. This class had to be hothoused, virtually overnight. And it was. In the end, a combination of elements of underground mafiosa, the nomenklatura, especially the top managers of certain industries, and segments of the intelligentsia —these people were essentially drafted to privatize the economy criminally. Indeed, Sachs and the HIID bear much responsibility for the creation of Russia's criminal capitalists because they drafted many of the privatization decrees. Indeed, the U.S. government is now investigating whether, and to what extent, the HIID broke U.S. laws by funneling hundreds of millions of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) dollars into the hands of corrupt privatizers like Anatoly Chubais and his cronies, and to what extent Harvard academic advisors personally profited in the process.

In sum, a decade after the latest generation of Harvard's "best and brightest" did Russia, the one-time superpower has been effectively demodernized. The economy is in ruins; the country is saddled with more than 150 billion dollars in debt; healthcare and social services have been gutted; 70 to 80 percent of the population survive at subsistence; a third of the country's population is now living in extreme poverty, many on the verge of starvation; and a class of gangster capitalists has supplanted the Stalinist bureaucracy. And this is what U.S. economists call a "rational," "normal" economy.[4]

The fundamental conditions of capitalist production have come into existence in Russia very quickly: on the one side are the mass of Russians who have lost all guarantees of existence

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afforded by the old Soviet arrangements; on the other side are owners of money, eager to increase their holdings. Nevertheless, today, the issue of private property is still bitterly contested and far from settled in Russia. Private property is still not fully legal and there is still no independent judiciary, no bourgeois state, to back it up. Russian public resistance to the legalization of this "grabification" of state-owned property remains strong. Yet without these guarantees, most Russian capitalists remain reluctant to sink money into productive investments at home. So there has been little productive investment, little development, and the economy continues to sink even as privatization and marketization advance.

"Getting Rich is Glorious"

China's transition to capitalism has followed a sharply different course, but with a similar end result.[5] On the one hand, China's post-Communist ruling class is striving to fully expropriate the proletariat, to break their "iron rice bowls" (their guaranteed jobs, state-subsidized housing, free medical care) and to subject them to market discipline, breaking through socialist "sloth" and raising labor productivity (even, according to New York-based Human Rights in China, to the point of reproducing the workhouses of Dickens' England). On the other hand, they're striving to privatize the profits of, and eventually the ownership of, the country's state-owned means of production. Many cadres are also "borrowing" state funds and "plunging into the sea of the market." This struggle has been led by China's highest-level cadres, starting with Deng Xiaoping and his children. Since the onset of reform in the early 1980s, these post-Communist robber barons have plunged into a veritable orgy of corruption, embezzlement, bribery, kickbacks, graft, smuggling, currency manipulation, influence peddling, and theft of state funds to amass personal fortunes and privatize state monies, enterprises, and properties. It was, of course, this "official corruption" that was the main grievance of protestors in the Tiananmen uprising in 1989. This resentment is, if anything, felt more deeply today.

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China's transition to capitalism has differed from the Russian case in two main ways: first, the Chinese, starting in 1978, broke up their communes and effectively privatized much of the agricultural sector (whereas in Russia, agricultural production is still carried out mainly by large-scale, state-owned, state-managed farms). Though still maintaining formal legal ownership of all agricultural land, the government instituted long-term leases that gave peasants some incentive to improve. Though still enforcing production quotas for major crops like grain, oil crops, and cotton, the government allowed peasant farmers freedom to organize production and to sell sideline produce on the free market. These reforms transformed China's agricultural sector, generating regular and sustained increases in farm output that served to underpin the entire reform process.

Secondly, whereas the Russians rapidly (and criminally) privatized large sections of state industry right at the start of the reform process, the Chinese have, so far, maintained state ownership, management, and planning of the bulk of the industrial economy. Side-by-side with this state sector, however, the Chinese simultaneously promoted the development of a new private and semi-private economy, heavily foreign-funded and export-oriented. This economy is composed mainly of new rural township industries and "Special Economic Zones" established in the 1980s in Guangdong and other coastal provinces. In contrast to state industries, which still produce mainly for the plan, these new industries produce for market, and they have few to none of the restrictions or social obligations imposed on state industries. So the Chinese created, in essence, an economy within the economy. They were able to do this mainly because they were able to tap into the vast wealth of Hong Kong and other overseas Chinese to fund private and semi-private development. The Chinese leadership also invited western, especially U.S., investment, which began flowing heavily into the special economic zones in the mid-to-late 1980s. So, again in contrast to the Russian case, foreign investment has largely funded the breathtaking growth of China's non-state sector industries in the eighties

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and nineties. In this way, in the first phase, at least, the transition to capitalism has not been as traumatic as the shock therapy model Sachs' HIID and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) imposed on Russia. Yet by preserving state ownership of most of the industrial economy, the process of primitive accumulation in China has only been delayed.

Under Mao's "classless communism" prior to 1978, China had no capitalists and no private property. Virtually all industry was government owned, as was all land. Workers were tied to their production units, but as part and parcel of their lack of freedom, they had a presumptive right to their jobs, and their children could likewise expect to be assigned work, and enjoyed rights to their housing, medical care, childcare, free schools, and numerous subsidies. This was the workers' so-called "iron rice bowl." Everyone wore the same blue suit and was more or less equally poor—but could feel economically secure. The Communist cadres enjoyed the fruits of the system but they owned nothing personally. When, in 1978, Deng abandoned Mao's "socialism in poverty" and called on China's masses to "get rich!" he was careful to bar Communist officials from going into business—it being unseemly at the time for actual card-carrying Communists to become practicing capitalists.

For years after launching the market reforms in 1978, the government sought to confine the developing market economy to farm sidelines, small-scale private manufacturing, and petty trading. These reforms were quite successful as far as they went. But rural, small-scale industry and farmers' markets were not going to generate the capital to renovate China's economy, and were not going to employ China's growing population.

Reluctant to give up control of state industry, China's Communists tried, in the 1980s, to reform state-owned urban industries by introducing some market reforms, such as pay hikes, bonus incentives, and two-tier pricing structures to encourage some out-of-plan production. But since they also continued to enforce mandatory production targets and state ownership of industry, the reforms had little effect. State industry stagnated, the national debt mounted as the government took on foreign loans, and, meanwhile, China's surging

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population growth was putting enormous pressures on the government to generate new jobs and raise incomes. By the mid-1980s, therefore, Deng gave the Communist cadres the go-ahead to get into business in a big way. The cadres were freed to set up joint ventures with foreign capitalists and even private enterprises in order to generate jobs, foreign investment and tax revenue. Yet China's cadres, like Russia's, lacked the personal capital to set up private businesses, and they did not own the state enterprises they ran. So without a "legal" way to embourgeoisment, China's red bourgeoisie began to build their fortunes through corruption. In the beginning, they enriched themselves by trading on their position, but they soon graduated to siphoning off state funds to set up private businesses. Rural cadres also levied numerous *ad hoc* levies on peasants.

In the ongoing collapse of China's social order into a pell-mell capitalist free-for-all, it is no longer clear who owns what. As in Russia, the transition to a market economy in the absence of a bourgeois legal framework is fast producing a descent into corruption, criminality, gangster capitalism, and violence in a society-wide struggle over property. In the cities, managers are struggling to break workers' job rights, and tens of thousands of industrial workers have been forced out of their state jobs and into the free market. Cadre capitalists strive to privatize "their" enterprises by means of stock frauds, back-door deals, bilking government treasuries, and outright theft. Factory bosses squeeze their workers, and government officials squeeze the capitalists. Government agencies, such as the army and schools, have gone into business. In the countryside, millions of Chinese peasants are being driven off their lands by economic necessity. The state refuses to pay them enough for their crops for the farmers to make a living wage, their land is ruined by overfarming or by drought (as precious water supplies are diverted to government and joint-venture industrial projects), or they're ejected by local officials, who confiscate their lands for joint venture industrial projects, road building, or urban sprawl.[6]

In March 1998, the govenment announced its intention to begin privatizing its ailing state-sector industry by selling off

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thousands of small, state-owned industries. But in just a few months, the program collapsed in corruption, as Prime Minister Zhu Rongji conceded in his speech to the National People's Congress in March 1999. Zhu was responding in part to the increasing public outrage at growing corruption. The threat of rising unemployment that privatization inevitably entails (and which China can ill afford) has forced China's reformers to retrench. For the moment, large-scale privatization is on hold.

The end result of this process of primitive accumulation cannot be foreseen. But what is absolutely certain is that far from the fantasy of a smooth, gradual transition to capitalism envisioned by western academic economists, capitalism will be born through intense class struggle in all its manifestations. And instead of a vast consumer cornucopia for all, we can expect to see vast poverty and unrest as millions more lose their lands and jobs. There is already a "floating population" of more than a hundred million mostly landless and homeless migrants in China. But as evidenced by reports like those in the Asia Monitor Center's *Asian Labor Update*, masses of people in China are not reacting passively to their forced transformation. Since the beginning of the decade, discontent over inflation, non-payment of back wages, layoffs, hazardous working conditions, and bureaucratic corruption has fed thousands of strikes, slowdowns, and protests against both state industries and foreign-owned firms. Peasant farmers have also protested over taxes, corruption, and expropriation of their lands. And despite ferocious state repression of labor activists, workers have repeatedly tried to form independent trade unions. China's increasingly restless and combative labor force has yet to find its voice, but when it does, this could throw a large wrench into the World Bank-comprador bureaucrat plans for a transition to capitalism. The government's reaction to the Falun Gong cult shows how desperately they fear independent organization.

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Conclusion

Capitalism requires a class of capitalists and a class of proletarians. These classes do not come into existence naturally and spontaneously. As evidenced in the first transition to capitalism from feudalism, and as we can see from observing the rapid transformations in the former Soviet bloc countries within the last twenty years, the enrichment of some and the impoverishment of the many is inevitably a brutal and corrupt process. The wonder is not that the introduction of capitalism is responsible for these disasters, but that the illustrious western economic "experts" who were the architects of the transition expected anything else.

NOTES

1. *The Economist* (January 13, 1990), p. 23; the following quotes from Sachs are also from this article.
2. Michael Specter, "Russia's Degenerating Health: Rampant Illness, Shorter Lives," *New York Times*, February 19, 1995.
3. *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1994, p. 79, also the source of the quote on page 2.
4. Some measure of the depth of despair among the victims of the transition to capitalism in Russsia is revealed in a recent poll on attitudes to reform. When asked, "What economic system would you prefer?" 48 percent of Russians polled said they would prefer "state planning and distribution," while just 35 percent preferred "private property and the market." To the statement "It would have been better if the country had stayed as it was before 1985," 58 percent answered "yes;" only 27 percent said "no." See the *Economist*, December 18, 1999, p. 21.
5. For a lengthier analysis, see Richard Smith, "The Chinese Road to Capitalism," *New Left Review* (May-June 1993), pp. 55-99. The following description draws from that article.
6. The methods and extent of offical corruption have been widely reported in China and the West. One of the best sources is a widely read new book *Zhongguo de xianjing [China's Pitfall]* (Hong Kong: Mingjing chubanshe, 1998), by newspaper reporter and former economist He Qinglian, which pushed the limits of official tolerance. Though not yet available in translation, see the review by Liu Binyan and Perry Link in the *New York Review of Books* (October 8, 1998).

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Overcoming Racism

by Staughton Lynd

Recently, there has been a great deal of discussion about the racism of white workers. Unfortunately, little has been said or written about how white working-class racism can be overcome. In this essay, I examine a prison uprising in which black and white convicts struggled with racism and overcame it to a surprising degree.

George Skatzes and the Lucasville Rebellion

From April 11 to 21, 1993, what appears to have been the longest prison rebellion in United States history took place at the maximum security prison in Lucasville, in southern Ohio.[1] More than four hundred prisoners were involved. Nine prisoners and a guard were killed. After a negotiated surrender, five prisoners in the rebellion were sentenced to death.

The single most remarkable thing about the Lucasville rebellion is that white and black prisoners formed a common front against the authorities. When the State Highway Patrol

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came into the occupied cell block after the surrender, they found slogans written on the walls of the corridor and in the gymnasium that read: "Convict unity," "Convict race," "Black and whites together," "Blacks and whites, whites and blacks, unity," "Whites and blacks together," "Black and white unity."

The five prisoners from the rebellion on death row—the "Lucasville Five"—are a microcosm of the rebellion's united front. Three are black, two are white. Two of the blacks are Sunni Muslims. Both of the whites were, at the time of the rebellion, members of the Aryan Brotherhood.

My wife and I know the Lucasville Five and are assisting with the appeal of one of the white men, who has since repented his affiliation with the Aryan Brotherhood. What we have learned should give pause to anyone inclined to dismiss all members of a group like the Aryan Brotherhood as incurably racist. Let me give you a synopsis of the childhood of George Skatzes (pronounced "skates"), his experiences during the 1993 rebellion, and the way that his actions ran out ahead of his organizational affiliation and political vocabulary.

In Marion, Ohio, where George grew up, whites lived on one side of the tracks and blacks on the other. George and his sister, Jackie, were the children of their mother's third marriage. Their parents were divorced when George was an infant and he grew up in his mother's home, where a succession of her boyfriends passed through. The house was in perpetual disorder; George and Jackie were embarrassed by the clothes they wore to school and never invited school friends to their house. George was often beaten by his mother or one of his two older stepbrothers. When he became a young adult, he often tried to help his mother, once working overtime for five weeks and saving all his pay to buy her a freezer and refrigerator. But the gift was unappreciated.

George became aware that the neighbors considered his family to be "white trash." He felt more welcome on the black side of town than by the people next door. One of his best friends was the child of an interracial couple. "I might as well have been biracial myself," he recalls.

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How could a person with these views have joined the Aryan Brotherhood at Lucasville? According to George, it was not because of an attitude of racial superiority. "You won't find anyone at Lucasville I judged because of the color of his skin," he insists, and the testimony of many black prisoners, both at trial and in private conversation with my wife and myself, supports this. "One race should not have to die for another to live," George Skatzes says. "We are all people."

Difficult as it may be for someone outside the walls to understand, George Skatzes states that he joined the Aryan Brotherhood because he perceived whites at Lucasville as a minority who needed to band together for self-protection. A majority of prisoners were black. The deputy warden, the warden, and the head of the statewide Department of Rehabilitation and Correction were black as well. On the one hand, all prisoners at Lucasville were oppressed. Conditions in the cell block used for administrative segregation were such that a petition was sent to Amnesty International and several prisoners cut off their pinky fingers and mailed them to the federal government. On the other hand, in Skatzes' experience, white prisoners like himself were punished for conduct that was condoned when committed by blacks.

Still insistent that these were the facts, Skatzes now says that joining the Aryan Brotherhood was "the biggest mistake of my life." In the course of responding to the day-by-day events of the rebellion, he found himself speaking not for white prisoners or for those white prisoners who belonged to the Aryan Brotherhood, but for the entire inmate body.

The disturbance at Lucasville was triggered by an attempt to force prisoners to submit to tuberculosis testing, by means of a substance containing alcohol injected under the skin. A number of Muslims said that receiving the injection was contrary to their religious beliefs, and suggested alternative means of testing. The warden responded that he was running the prison. He made plans to lock down the prison on the day after Easter and, if necessary, to force all prisoners to be injected. These plans became common knowledge. Accordingly, on the afternoon of Easter Sunday, prisoners returning from recrea-

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tion on the yard overpowered a number of guards and took them hostage, occupying the L block of the prison.

During the next several hours, black prisoners killed five white prisoners believed to be snitches. A race war, like the one during the Santa Fe prison riot a few years earlier, seemed imminent.

At this point, two Muslims approached George Skatzes. George had not taken part in planning the rebellion. He celled in L block and had stayed there when the riot began, in order to protect his property and to look after his friends. The black men who spoke to Skatzes were aware that, as a physically imposing older convict (in his late forties), "Big George" had often been asked to mediate disputes among prisoners. Siddique Abdullah Hasan and Cecil Allen told Skatzes that whites and blacks had gathered on different sides of the gymnasium and the atmosphere was very tense. They asked "Big George" to help them ensure that the protest would be directed against the prison administration, their common oppressor.

Skatzes agreed. He went to the gym and spoke to both the blacks and whites. He put his arm around the shoulders of a black man and said, "If they come in here, they're going to kill us no matter what color we are." He appealed to members of each group to mix with members of the other group.

The next day, April 12, George Skatzes (with a megaphone) and Cecil Allen (carrying a huge white flag of truce) went out on the yard to try to start negotiations. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, April 13 through 15, Skatzes was the principal telephone negotiator for the prisoners. He took part in meetings of a leadership council representing the three main organized groups in L block: the Muslims, members of the Aryan Brotherhood (ABs), and the Black Gangster Disciples. On the afternoon and evening of Thursday, April 15, he negotiated the release of a hostage guard who was experiencing extreme emotional trauma, accompanied Officer Clark into the yard, and released him to the authorities. He made a radio address in which he said: "We are a unit here. They try to make this a racial issue [but] it is not a racial issue. Black and white alike have joined hands at [Lucasville] and have become one strong unit."

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You see the point. The things that Skatzes *did*, in calming racial antagonisms, in working cooperatively with blacks, in characterizing the rebellion publicly as the work of "one strong unit," both black and white, hardly expressed the worldview of the Aryan Brotherhood. In part, Skatzes' actions expressed his personal decency; they also responded to a practical situation that called for racial cooperation. Experience ran ahead of ideology. Actions spoke louder than organizational labels.

George Skatzes and the black prisoners among the Lucasville Five stand in solidarity publicly and struggle privately to understand each other. During a fast that they undertook together, their list of demands, drafted by one of the blacks in the group, began with a concern for proper medical treatment for Skatzes. At the super-maximum-security prison in Youngstown where the Five are now housed, a number of prisoners began another fast. After about a week, only Skatzes and Siddique Abdullah Hasan were still going without food. The prison approached each one with assurances that their complaints would be addressed. Each refused to break his fast until told directly by the other that he was ready to eat again. Hasan wrote to me: "I chose to stay on the fast to let them know that I was down with George's struggle, too, and I would not sit quiet and allow the system to mess over him . . . [T]hey got the message and know that we are one."

From Prison Resistance to Class Struggle

How, if at all, can this experience of prisoners overcoming racism be extrapolated? What is the relationship of prison resistance to the wider movement for social change?

A good deal of the recent writing about racism calls on white workers to give up "white-skin privilege" voluntarily in order to become legitimate participants in the class struggle. Such a voluntaristic approach to racism is unsatisfactory for exactly the same reason that Marx and Engels found Utopian Socialism to be inadequate. Workers do not become socialists because agitators have gone house to house preaching the virtues of common ownership. Workers become socialists in

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action, through experience. Thus, Eugene Debs first recognized the need for the broadest possible unity of the working class in economic struggle and founded the American Railway Union to take the place of the separate unions of the railway crafts. Then, after the Pullman strike, Debs came to understand that in a capitalist society, government will always intervene in the economic class struggle on behalf of the capitalist class, and helped to organize the Socialist Party.

Racism, too, will be transformed through experience and struggle. We should anticipate that the objective contradictions of capitalism will again and again call on workers somehow to set aside their antagonisms toward one another, so that they can effectively act together against the common oppressor. As workers' *actions* change in response to the need for a solidarity in which the survival of each depends on the survival of all, *attitudes* will change also.

There are at least two obvious differences between resistance in prisons and forms of struggle outside the walls. First, a prison is a total environment. Black and white workers in the larger society typically leave behind the integrated workplace setting when they punch out, returning to segregated living situations in the community. Inside a prison, blacks and whites must survive in one another's company twenty-four hours a day.

Second, anything good inside a prison must ordinarily be brought about by the prisoners themselves, from below, through self-organization. In this respect, prisons differ from the military. Like prisons, the military is a total institution, but in the military, desirable social change can come from above, and *did* come from above, when the Armed Forces were integrated after the Second World War.

I know another George—George Sullivan, a truck driver from Gary, Indiana—whose experience illustrates the effectiveness of the equal status contract imposed from above in the Armed Forces. George Sullivan grew up in southern Illinois, the same racist setting recalled by David Roediger in the opening pages of *The Wages of Whiteness*.[2] George Sullivan describes the racism he absorbed as a child:

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> There never was any question in my mind that niggers weren't any good. I knew that, but it didn't necessarily mean they were bad people because everyone knew that a nigger's a coward and he won't cause you any trouble. There weren't any around where I lived.
>
> One did come to the house one time, scared me to death. I saw him at the door, there he was, and I didn't know what to do. Any time we would be doing something wrong, one of the comments my mother would make was, "I'll have some big nigger come and get you if you don't stop that." So I went to the door and there was this big nigger. I just knew that he had come after me. But that's the only association I had. I wasn't taught to hate them. It was like the feeling about animals. Their place is not in the house or it's not where *you* are. Animals live in the woods. Niggers live somewhere else.[3]

George Sullivan's relationship with blacks changed when he went into the military. The new policy of integration had just gone into effect. George reported to a barracks where he found that he was the only white. After informing the sergeant that there had been a mistake, he was told, "No, we've been having some problems about not integrating enough. As new white guys come on the base they're going to be put in there. You just happen to be the first." Then this happened:

> I was a meat-cutter and I got a bit careless. I cut three or four of my fingers. I had them all bandaged up. I had just been promoted to sergeant but I still had my corporal stripes. I was sitting out in front of the barracks and the sergeant came by and he said, "Sullivan, get your stripes on." "I can't sew with one hand," I said, "and I don't have any money to take them over to the PX." He said, "You'll have stripes on your uniform by tomorrow or we'll take the stripes away from you."
>
> I was sitting there by myself just wondering what to do. One of the guys in the barracks who'd heard it, he came out and said, "Have you already got your stripes?" I said, "Yeah, I bought them already." He said, "Well, if you'll go get them I'll sew them on for you." So that was the first thing that really broke the ice. He sat and sewed those stripes on my uniform while we got to know each other.[4]

Neither George Skatzes nor George Sullivan were, or are, ideological radicals. But they are white workers who have substantially overcome the racism that surrounded them. Both learned through their experience to deal with people as individuals rather than to judge them by the color of their skin.

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We need a synthesis of the pressure for social change illustrated by the military policy of integration, with working-class self-emancipation. Prison resistance begins to suggest such a synthesis. There, the common need to survive creates the pressure to cooperate. But prison administrators will not organize that cooperation from above. In fact, prison administrators do all that they can to forbid and break up self-organization by prisoners. Therefore, black and white prisoners must depend on themselves to build solidarity with each other.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the self-organized protest movement of blacks created a model for students, women, workers, and eventually, soldiers. In the same way, the self-organized resistance of black and white prisoners can become a model for the rest of us in overcoming racism. Life will continue to ask of working people that they find their way to solidarity. Surely, there are sufficient instances of deep attitudinal change on the part of white workers to persuade us that a multi-ethnic class consciousness is not only necessary, but also possible.

NOTES

1. I have written about the Lucasville rebellion in "Black and White and Dead All Over: The Lucasville Insurrection," *Race Traitor*, no. 8 (Winter 1998); "Lessons from Lucasville," *The Catholic Worker*, vol. LXV, no. 7 (December 1998); "The Lucasville Trials," *Prison Legal News*, vol. 10, no. 6 (June 1999). I have also written a docudrama entitled "Big George," a play about the rebellion in two acts and twelve scenes, in which the dialogue is drawn entirely from words actually spoken. Those who would like a copy can send a check for $7.50, made out to me, to 1694 Timbers Court, Niles, OH 44446.
2. David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 3-5.
3. George Sullivan, "Working for Survival," in *Rank and File: Personal Histories by Working-Class Organizers* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998), p. 202.
4. *Ibid*, pp. 202-203.

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Kosovo and "the Jewish Question"

by John Rosenthal

Whether or not it is true, as Václav Havel famously claimed, that NATO's attack on Yugoslavia represents the first war to be waged "in the name of principles and values," the first "ethical war," it might well be the case that it is the first act of armed aggression against a sovereign state whose popular legitimation relied almost wholly upon an alleged historical analogy. NATO spokespersons and apologists could not allude often enough to the Second World War, Hitler, and the Nazi regime's persecution of the Jews. They did this in lieu of providing reasoned justification for NATO's action, perhaps because under existing international law there was surely no such justification to be found. The NATO attack had to be presented as morally urgent, since it was manifestly illegal. For this purpose, allusion to the "Holocaust" and, in Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's words, the "absolute evil" of its perpetrators, was the most obvious and effective instrument.[1]

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Thus, on May 13, in a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars—a group which can be supposed, on the whole, to have been skeptical of NATO intervention—Bill Clinton explicitly compared the alleged "ethnic cleansing" of the Kosovo Albanians by Yugoslav forces to the "ethnic extermination of the Holocaust." The two were not "the same," he said cryptically, but they were "related." In continental Europe, German Minister of Defense Rudolf Scharping set the tone, announcing confidently, in late March, that "the genocide [*Völkermord*] has begun."[2] Over the next several weeks, Scharping continued to provide grist for the mill of Germany's boulevard press by adding pointed details about "concentration camps" and racial "selection" (and even—momentarily forgoing the specific allusions to the "Holocaust" for a graphic invocation of pure "evil"—of Serbian soldiers "playing soccer" with the severed heads of their victims).[3] References to the media's autonomous employment of the same set of allusions are not, I trust, necessary here. The association of Albanians in Yugoslavia with Jews under the Third Reich and, concomitantly, of Serbs with Nazis—curiously, *not* of Serbs with Germans or Serbian Socialist Party members with Nazis, which latter analogies would at least maintain a plausible proportionality—permeated coverage of the Kosovo crisis in the western media.[4] The Milosevic/Hitler association was, of course, part of the same schema. Such associations effectively served to undermine the possibility of dispassionate discussion of NATO policy. Who, after all, would want to be thought accomplice, even by omission, to another "Holocaust?"

Typically, however, the allusion to the Nazi persecution of the Jews was left so vague that it remained unclear whether comparison was being made to the specifically *German* Jews (i.e., those Jews who were legally resident within the recognized borders of Germany prior, say, to March 1938 and the *Anschluss* of Austria), or rather to *all* such Jews throughout Europe who eventually fell under the civil or military, official or unofficial, jurisdiction of the German Reich (whether through residence in Germany or residence in those territories that were, from 1938 onward, annexed to the Reich

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and/or occupied militarily by its forces). This may seem like an insignificant nuance, but, in fact, the *eliding* of this distinction was crucial to the legitimating function that the allusion played in NATO propaganda. For it is the alleged analogy to the *genocidal extreme* at which Nazi "Jewish policy" arrived during the Second World War and which affected *all* of European Jewry that was invoked in order to stylize the Kosovo Albanians into "persecuted Jews." This hyperbolic construal of the analogy—grounded, as will be seen below, in a remarkable debasement of the very concept of "genocide"—forestalled examination of the legal and political details of the Kosovo Albanians' status under the Yugoslav regime. Only such an examination would allow meaningful comparison to be made to the status of German Jews under the prewar Nazi regime. When comparison is thus made on the basis of the respective details, as will be done here, the claim to analogy obviously fails.

In this connection, Hollywood depictions of the Third Reich and especially no doubt Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* made an important ideological contribution in preparing the ground for public acceptance of NATO's actions. In a popular consciousness weaned on such representations, all the details of the Third Reich and the Second World War merge into the background upon which the drama of the "Holocaust" is played out. The latter is so thoroughly identified with the "essence" of the Nazi regime that all its other crimes (like, for instance, the crimes of one Oskar Schindler in serving as an informant for the German *Abwehr* in Czechoslovakia) are effectively absolved. Thus, it has been possible in the United States—and, symptomatically, also in Germany—for vague allusions to the Third Reich to bring with them the implication that just as it was "right" for the Allies to wage war against Nazi Germany in light of the latter's criminal policy with respect to the Jews (though perhaps not "right" for them to have done so on account of the "mere" invasion of Poland?), so it was also "right" for NATO to wage war against present-day Yugoslavia in light of the latter's criminal policy with respect to the Kosovo Albanians.

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Nazi "Jewish Policy" and the Outbreak of the Second World War

A first problem with such a suggestion is that the Allies never did, in fact, wage war against Nazi Germany on account of its "Jewish policy" and, furthermore, the specifically *German* Jews were never *as such* the object of genocide. Rather, the Allies serially entered into a war against Nazi Germany on the grounds of its invasion of or declaration of war against other sovereign states, whether themselves or third states to which they were bound by treaty; and the German Jews before the outbreak of the war were subjected, under Nazi rule, not to any policy of planned extermination, but to one of gradual political and civil exclusion, accompanied by state-sanctioned and often state-promoted campaigns of extra-legal harassment. This latter process was initiated by the 1933 laws designed (as it turned out, not entirely successfully) to exclude Jews from employment in the civil service and liberal professions; it reached a crucial legislative juncture with the so-called Nuremberg Laws of 1935 (the "Law for the Protection of German Blood" and the new Reich Citizenship Law); and continued thereafter in the form of piecemeal "Aryanizations" (whether direct expropriations or quasi-legal coerced transfers) of "Jewish-owned" firms. By 1938 the Nazi goal of "driving out the Jews" from the German economy had been, for all intents and purposes, achieved. (Of course, not long afterward, both German and non-German Jews would be reinserted into the wartime Reich economy, now in the guise of slave-laborers.) In stripping all such persons as counted under the law as "Jews" of their German citizenship (an earlier law had already enabled case-by-case "denaturalization"), the new Reich Citizenship Law afforded the exclusion of the Jews with a certain legal coherence which it would have lacked otherwise. Practically, however, its effects were somewhat less dramatic. Given the role already played by the so-called *ius sanguinis* or "right of blood" in the Wilhelmine citizenship law of 1913, which continued in force through the Weimar period, more recent Jewish emigrants to Germany and their descen-

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dants had largely been prevented from acquiring German citizenship anyway.[5] In any case, the entire process, in all its diverse facets, clearly depended upon the legal definition of "Jewishness," which was finally codified with scholastic subtlety (if not logical consistency)[6] in a supplementary decree to the Citizenship Law. Only *after* the outbreak of the war did the Nazi regime implement a policy of planned extermination of *all* such Jews as fell under the *de facto* authority of the Reich, thus comprising as well the specifically German Jews.

Despite a recent reform proposal—which was quickly withdrawn by the current Social Democratic/Green coalition government following evidence of popular opposition and replaced by a largely cosmetic revision—the 1913 citizenship law effectively remains in force in Germany even *today*.[7] Consequently, if there is any "minority" group in contemporary Europe whose legal status and situation bears a strong, structural analogy to that of the German Jews under the Third Reich, it is the roughly two million German *Turks* presently living in Germany. As will be seen momentarily, the status and situation of the Kosovo Albanians in the Yugoslav Federation bore no such analogy. The overwhelming majority of the German Turks have either lived in Germany for decades or were born there, yet only in exceptional cases do they enjoy the status of German citizens.[8] In light of the wave of racist attacks on Turks in Germany that followed "reunification," and the notably weak—if not to say, as far as the assailants are concerned, positively accommodating—juridical and legislative response to these attacks, the analogy is even more exact. This is not to say that the progressive exclusion to which German Jews were subjected in the Third Reich is likely to repeat itself as concerns Turks in the Federal Republic,[9] if only because on the whole German Turks have never achieved the same degree of integration as German Jews had before the Nazi party's rise to power. It was necessary for the Nazis, in effect, to transform the German Jews into foreigners in their own land;[10] the German Turks, by contrast, have never been allowed to be anything but that. In any case, I know of no major "human rights" group that has devoted itself to exposing the

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discriminatory effects of the German state's policy towards Germany's Turkish residents, much less of any calls for a NATO intervention in Germany on the account of the latter!

The Question of Genocide

Of course, if prior to the NATO intervention the Kosovo Albanians were being subjected by the Yugoslav state to a genocidal policy, then the details of their legal status under the *ancien régime,* and of the political struggle that pitted Albanian nationalist forces against both the Serbian provincial and Yugoslav federal states, would all be moot. There would, then, be an abundantly obvious analogy—the very one which is so often suggested—*not,* however, to the treatment of the German Jews *per se,* but rather to that of European Jewry *tout court* under Nazi rule.[11] This would still not imply that the Allied invasion of the German Reich in the Second World War provides a meaningful precedent for NATO intervention in Yugoslavia today. As noted, the Allied invasion was a response to German external aggression, *not* to the Reich's Jewish policy. By drawing attention to this fact, I do not mean to be suggesting that the principle of foreign intervention to prevent genocide is unfounded. The Allied intervention in the Second World War simply did not involve any application of such a principle. Indeed, the other cases in the twentieth century which could plausibly be construed as instances of state-sponsored genocide likewise occurred in the context of what were *already* wartime situations and, though this is not the place to enter into the matter, I suspect that this is not mere coincidence. So, the foundation of such a principle of intervention is probably not in fact as pressing a matter as is often suggested nowadays.

In any event, apart from its employment as a sanctimonious pretext, such a principle is utterly irrelevant to the Kosovo case, since if the term "genocide" is being used in anything like its hitherto customary sense, there is no evidence whatsoever to support the claim that a genocide was occurring or was about to occur there. Especially in the context of the wars of Yugoslav succession, it has become alarmingly common nowadays to use the term "genocide" to refer to *any* form of group

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oppression, rather than just (as the term's very etymology implies) the organized *physical* destruction—one does not speak, for instance, of a "homicide" after which the victim is still alive!—of the members of some putative group and on account of their ascribed group-membership. The last mentioned condition is essential. It needs to be stressed that the genocidal policy of the German Reich with regard to the Jews, for example, would not have been possible without a prior stage of administrative *"Absonderung:"* a "sorting out" from the population as a whole of those persons who were to count as "Jews." The same, of course, holds for the genocidal practices of the Reich with regard to Roma ("gypsies"), who were also targeted for extermination throughout Germany and the occupied territories.

The hyperinflationary use of the term "genocide" deserves, incidentally, to be considered as a new and more subtle form of negationism. This new form of negationism does not directly deny the occurrence of the genocide perpetrated against European Jews; instead, through overgeneralization, it effectively denies its specificity, thus making the genocidal policy—or, more exactly, polic*ies*—of the Third Reich appear a regrettable but, nonetheless, relatively "normal" occurrence. This new negationism is surely more dangerous than the older, cruder variety, since whereas the latter was largely restricted to neo-Nazi cranks, the former has become, as one says in German, *salonfähig*—acceptable in good company.[12]

According to the most widely disseminated estimates, the last year of the conflict between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and Yugoslav forces prior to the inception of the NATO attack last March resulted in some two thousand deaths. This figure includes victims from among *all* of Kosovo's nationalities, *including Serbs.* Nevertheless, even if it were supposed that all of the victims were Albanians, in light of a total Albanian population in the region of some 1.8 million prior to the war, such numbers can hardly justify talk of "genocide." According to well-known and widely accepted estimates, some five to six million Jews fell victim to the genocidal practices of the Third Reich, constituting at least half of the total Jewish population

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resident in Europe. The gas chamber at Auschwitz was built to kill two thousand persons *at a time.* Toward the end of the war, roughly six thousand persons a day were being killed at Auschwitz alone. If significantly dissimilar events are to be kept distinguished, then there must clearly be *some* quantitative criterion for the application of the term "genocide." Events in Kosovo prior to the NATO intervention clearly do not meet that criterion.

I do not mean to suggest by this that numbers alone (or, more exactly, proportions) matter. Even without numbers sufficient to constitute *prima facie* evidence of the occurrence of genocide, it might still be legitimate to speak adjectivally of a "genocidal *policy*" or "genocidal *practices*" if there is evidence, as according to the definition given above, of the methodical targeting of *civilian* population for extermination on account of ascribed group-membership. But the facts of the case in Kosovo likewise fail to satisfy this "qualitative" criterion. Even the alleged massacre of Albanian civilians by Yugoslav forces at Racak on January 15, 1999, which served as a kind of "trigger" for the propaganda offensive preceding NATO's bombing campaign, cannot be regarded as probative in this regard. Both eyewitness accounts of western journalists, supported by Associated Press footage of a gunbattle filmed earlier that day, and forensic evidence suggest that the dead were, in fact, in this case too, KLA combatants.[13]

This is not to deny that *after* the onset of NATO bombing, Yugoslav regular forces or Serb paramilitaries *then* took action against Albanian civilians, either killing them or driving them from their homes, in the interest of "cleansing" the region of its Albanian population. It is also, frankly, not to affirm the latter. The fact is that for information even about alleged "Serbian" atrocities committed after the start of the NATO attack, we have hitherto been almost entirely dependent upon NATO sources. Under these circumstances, intellectual honesty demands that we withhold judgement—an attitude, incidentally, whose prudence has been largely confirmed by recent revelations.[14] In any case, it remains true that there is no evidence of such aggression by Serb forces against the civilian population *before* the bombing started.

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The Trouble with "Minority Rights"

If not, then, the victims or targets of a genocidal policy on the part of the Yugoslav state, were the Kosovo Albanians subjected to a process of political and civil exclusion analogous to that to which the German Jews were subjected by the German State in the Third Reich? Here again, the facts—and now we are dealing with straightforward institutional facts which are easily verifiable by anyone—simply do not support such a conclusion. The pivotal event in the conflict opposing the Yugoslav federal and Serbian provincial states on the one hand, and the Albanian nationalist leadership in Kosovo on the other, was the 1989 reform of the Serbian Constitution, which reduced the autonomous powers of the province. This reform did not in any way affect the political and civil rights of individual Kosovars as citizens of the Yugoslav Federation and the Serbian Republic. These continued to be guaranteed to all citizens of the Federation and the Republic, regardless of self-proclaimed or ascribed nationality. Even this guarantee, however, was not a concession, but rather an *affront* to the aspirations of the provincial leadership. For these aspirations did not concern the *civil* rights of Kosovo Albanians, but rather the communal or "group" rights claimed on their behalf. It was the communal rights of Kosovo Albanians inasmuch as a so-called "national minority" within Serbia and Yugoslavia that the constitutional reform was perceived to have infringed upon and their communal prerogatives, as created by the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, that it did indeed reduce.[15]

Now, the notion of national "minority rights" is a notoriously slippery one. On a liberal interpretation of the expression—and this was the intepretation which held sway in international jurisprudence until very recently—such rights are strictly linguistic or cultural in character and, in fact, belong to *the individual.* They are the rights of an individual who *so happens* to form part of a linguistic or cultural "minority" freely to employ her native tongue and to give expression to other aspects of her cultural heritage. Obviously, when we begin to consider the concrete institutional contexts in which such

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rights might be claimed—the school, the courts, the legislature—the scope of their validity becomes itself a complicated matter.

When, however, the subject of "minority rights" is understood as the "national minority" itself, i.e., *the group*, and when the "minority" in question in fact constitutes the *majority* on some part of the national territory, then the content of such "rights" will invariably take the form of communal self-government within the relevant region. Inasmuch, however, as the population of the region in question is itself ethnically heterogenous, this will require either that the "group rights" of the local "minorities" are guaranteed in turn or the degradation of the status of the latter, in effect, to "second-class citizens" (or, more precisely, provisionally tolerated "state-members," analogous indeed to the German Jews under the Third Reich) with all the dangers of eventual expulsion or worse which this comports. Indeed, the discrimination and insecurity suffered by non-Albanians in Kosovo under the pre-1989 autonomous regime clearly contributed to their agitation and to the agitation within the Serbian Republic as a whole for a modification of the province's status.

Though the western media, French *nouveau philosophes*, and NATO officials have somehow managed to depict such ethnic-national minority politics as the model for "multiculturalism," they are obviously rather the perfect recipe for what could be more accurately described as juxtaposed *mono*culturalism. Their immanent logic is such that the only stable outcome to which they can lead is *not* in fact a regime of protected "minority rights" within the framework of existing political structures, but rather full-fledged *secession* and the creation of new ethnically homogenous "microstates" under the banner of "national self-determination" (with the prospect, in the case of "microstates" geographically contiguous to a larger ethnic-national "homeland," of eventual attachment to the latter). More exactly, where the population of each of the erstwhile national regions is likewise ethnically "mixed" and their own "national minorities" constitute in turn local "*majorities*," what can be expected is a *nesting pattern* of secessions followed by civil war to determine what parts of the fragmented national territory will

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pertain finally to which "ethnicities." So-called "ethnic cleansing" is likewise a completely "normal" aspect of this process, inasmuch as once the principle of ethnic-national "self-determination" has been accepted, the spiral of dissolution and intercommunal violence can only be halted when the populations of the new national territories have obtained the requisite degree of homogeneity. The dynamic here described is exactly the dynamic that has played itself out in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Even the much-vaunted and reputedly "multicultural" Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is, in fact, a largely fictive state invented by the western powers and masking the existence of not two but, effectively, *three* independent and juxtaposed ethnic-national "microstates" dividing the Bosnian territory.[16] Those KFOR officials, media commentators, and western political leaders who today denounce the violence committed against the Serbian population in Kosovo and bemoan the exodus of the latter from the region can hardly be supposed ingenuous in their expressions of fellow-feeling. The "cleansing" of Kosovo of Serbs and other "minorities" was a completely predictable consequence of the project of ethnic-national state-building to which NATO lent its military support.

Of course, if "self-determination" is interpreted simply as rule "with the consent of the governed"—as according to Lloyd George's famous formula from 1918—then the demand for "self-determination" need not lead to the consequences described above. In this case, "self-determination" is barely more than a synonym for democratic government, with the added connotation of *local* rule when the demand is raised against the claims to authority of a colonial or imperial power. The problems arise, however, when the "nation" whose "self-determination" is in question is construed not as a *politically* constituted community, but rather as an *ethnic* group whose communal character is supposed in principle to pre-exist the state. In this latter case, the "right of national self-determination" is transformed into the ostensible right of each "nation" in this ethnic sense to form *its own state.*

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In any event, the struggle of German Jews following the rise to power of the Nazis was a defensive struggle to protect their *civil rights* as individuals against the discriminatory and exclusionary policies of the Nazi state. It was *not* a struggle to protect any "minority rights" that they might be supposed to claim or enjoy as a group, much less to assert any supposed collective right to "national self-determination." (There were, of course, Zionist groups in Weimar Germany, but it is highly implausible to suppose that even the most optimistic of them expected to secede from the German Reich with some part of German territory!) The Nazi state did not seek to withdraw from Jews any "minority rights," since they had never been ascribed nor, for the most part, had they demanded any such rights in the first place. In fact, the *opposite* is the case. It was precisely the Nazi state's withdrawal of their political and civil rights and its exclusion of the Jews from ever widening domains of normal civil activity, as noted above, which led to the formation within the now isolated or "*abgesonderten*" Jewish community of just those institutions typically associated with self-government under a regime of "minority rights." Thus it was only in the autumn of 1933 that a political organization supposed specifically to represent the interests of German Jews, the *Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland,* was founded. Similarly, in 1933, as an emergency response to the School Law of April 25, which established a *numerus clausus* on Jewish enrollment in high schools and universities, Jews were, in effect, forced to establish independent "Jewish" schools. By the end of 1936, there had likewise developed an independent Jewish welfare system, an independent Jewish healthcare system, and a full-fledged, if shrinking on account of immigration, "Jewish economic sector." There were even now the rudiments of a "Jewish" judicial system, drawing on the tradition of rabbinical courts, which offered arbitration of civil disputes among Jews and hence allowed them to circumvent the hostile environment of the German courts.[17]

The founding of almost every one of such autonomous "Jewish" institutions bears a clear, if superficial, resemblance to developments among the Kosovo Albanian community of

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the 1990s: the establishment of an independent Kosovo Albanian government in 1991, the founding of specifically "Albanian" educational and healthcare systems, the application of the *Kanun,* the traditional unwritten law of the Albanian clans, and so on. But, in fact, the contrast between the two cases could not be starker. Following the 1989 re-assertion of Serbian sovereignty over the territory of Kosovo, the political leadership of the Kosovo Albanians chose to *boycott* the institutions of the Serbian state and to establish parallel, ethnically specific "Albanian" institutions. This does not lessen the repressiveness of the Serbian state's response to the national aspirations of Kosovo Albanians: a response that was inevitably all the more repressive in light of the fact that the Yugoslav federation, under the provisions of its 1974 constitution, previously had largely catered to these aspirations. But we should be clear, at least, that this response was directed precisely at national aspirations which, in principle, rejected the authority of the Serbian state and which, even before 1989, had aimed to organize the institutions of public life in Kosovo along ethnic lines.

German Jews under the Third Reich were, by contrast, *forced* to establish parallel institutions by virtue of their *being excluded* from the institutions of the German state. In effect, it was *the Nazi regime* that transformed German Jews into an ethnic "community" with a special status as such under the law. They did not themselves demand this status. For German Jews, whose newfound institutional "autonomy" was not matched by any claim to territorial sovereignty, this process was the prelude to expulsion and, for those who did not succeed in escaping beyond the borders of the Reich and the occupied territories, extermination. For Kosovo Albanians, the process of political affirmation of their autonomous status was rather the prelude to *de facto* secession—and indeed to the expulsion of *non*-Albanian, ethnically "foreign" elements from the newly "liberated" national territory.

Precedent and Perspectives

It can only be regarded as the symptom of a severe deterioration of historical consciousness that amidst all the allusions to the

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Second World War and the Third Reich which accompanied the public treatment of the Kosovo crisis, a more obvious analogy for the latter, from exactly the same historical context, was almost completely ignored: namely, the *Sudetenland* crisis of 1938. The similarities between the two cases can be appreciated from the comments of a contemporary, written on September 23, 1938:

> For almost two decades now, and among various other nationalities, also Germans in Czecho-Slovakia have in the most unworthy fashion been abused, tormented, economically ruined and above all prevented from realizing the right of self-determination of nations also for themselves. All attempts by these oppressed people to alter their fate have failed on account of the brutal will to destroy of the Czechs. The latter possessed the state's means of repression and did not hesitate to use them in a ruthless and barbaric manner.

The author of these words is, of course, Adolf Hitler. In his letter to Neville Chamberlain, written during a break in their consultations at Bad Godesberg, one week prior to the signing of the Munich Agreement, Hitler goes on to cite a figure of 120 thousand refugees having already been forced to flee the region, and demands the immediate severing of the *Sudetenland* from Czechoslovakia—in the absence of which the German Wehrmacht would take control of the *Sudetenland* by force.[18] Hitler's grim depiction of the urgency of the Sudeten Germans' plight drew support from the crescendo of atrocity stories which Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry had disseminated in the German press over the previous weeks and which appeared under headlines such as "13 More Blood-Witnesses for Sudeten-German Right to Self-Determination: Arson Attacks, Murder, Martial Law, Foreign [i.e., Czechoslovak] Police and Soldiers with Tanks Rage Against the German Population;" and "Bloody Butchery in Halbersbirk: With Tanks and Machine-Guns Against a Sudeten-German Village;" and "Czech Orgy of Murder in the Sudetenland;" and "Bestial Abuse of Sudeten-Germans in the Prisons;" and even, dramatically portraying the putative threats of the "bestial" Czechs, "We Will Play Football with Your Heads."[19]

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But while it was the alleged atrocities committed against the Sudeten-Germans which were used as propaganda to hasten the intervention, Hitler also insisted upon a quasi-legal justification for the severing of the *Sudetenland* from Czechoslovakia: namely, the very "right of national self-determination" which is so often invoked today (even indeed by *critics* of the NATO attack!) in connection with Kosovo. Of course, Hitler claimed to be especially concerned for the "right to self-determination" of the Sudeten-Germans, but he presented himself in his meetings with Chamberlain also as the advocate for the other allegedly "oppressed national minorities" in Czechoslovakia: Poles, Hungarians, Ruthenians, and Slovaks. Just a few months later, he would appear yet again as the patron of aspirations to national "self-determination" in orchestrating the secession of Slovakia from rump Czechoslovakia.

Hitler's letter to Chamberlain rehearsed much of the same content as his closing speech to the Nazi Party Congress on September 12. "I demand," he said there (in somewhat unusual German), "that the oppression of 3½ Million Germans in Czecho-Slovakia come to an end and that the free right to self-determination take its place [*an dessen Stelle tritt*]."[20] Indeed, already in a Reichstag speech of February 20, 1938, Hitler had made clear his plans for the *Sudetenland.* The Reichstag speech is especially interesting for our purposes, since in it Hitler explicitly recognizes that the "right to national self-determination" could only be fulfilled at the cost of the violation of international law, understood in the customary sense as the law guaranteeing the rights of and governing the relations among sovereign states. Speaking of the Sudeten-Germans and their relation to the German Reich, Hitler comments: "The juridical separation from the Reich as far as international law is concerned [*die staatsrechtliche Trennung vom Reich*] cannot lead to a national-political lawlessness [*zu einer volkspolitischen Rechtslosmachung*], this is to say that the universal rights to national self-determination ... cannot be ignored simply because Germans are here concerned."[21] The Nazi legal theorist Carl Schmitt, writing just after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and shortly before the German invasion of

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Poland, called the idea of ethnic-nationhood—of "each and every people [*Volk*] as a form of life determined by kind and origin, blood and soil"—the "great political idea" which it would be the vocation of the German Reich to disseminate throughout Europe. "The deed of our Führer," Schmitt concluded, with obvious reference to Hitler's "solution" of the "Sudeten question," "has infused this thought of our Reich with political actuality, historical truth and a great future in international law."[22]

The "great future" that Schmitt foresaw in 1939 turned out to be a catastrophe for Europe that lasted exactly until May 1945. However, in the wake of the NATO attack on Yugoslavia, political leaders of the NATO alliance, so-called "human rights" advocates and leading political theorists in both Europe and the United States have all been displaying a notable enthusiasm for the subordination of states' sovereignty to the alleged "rights"of ethnic-nations or "peoples." The "great future" of Schmitt's "great idea" might well be now, and there is no reason to expect that its current realization will prove any less catastrophic than its first. One thing, in any event, is certain: the struggle of German Jews under the Third Reich was not a struggle for "self-determination" in the ethnic-national sense. It was, on the contrary, the application of the ethnic-national "principle of self-determination" under Nazi hegemony that eventually made the very existence of Jews and other "stateless peoples" in occupied Europe untenable.

NOTES

1. Goldhagen himself, who, whatever the virtues or otherwise of his book on Nazi Germany, has given no sign of actually knowing anything about the Balkans or Yugoslavia, nonetheless substantially contributed to the popular currency enjoyed by this analogy. See Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, "A New Serbia," *The New Republic*, May 17, 1999. I use the term "Holocaust" in scare-quotes, by the way, because it is quite literally a mystifying expression and hence, to my mind, in general better avoided. The Greek *holocauston* is the biblical term for a burnt sacrifice.
2. Associated Press, March 29, 1999. For the enthusiastic uptake of the Defense Minister's remark in the boulevard press, see, for example, "Scharping: Völkermord an den Albanern hat begonnen," *Berliner Kurier*, March 30, 1999. Curiously, some three weeks later, Scharping spoke merely of "increasingly strong indications of mass executions." (See "Protokoll des Grauens," *Berliner Kurier*, April 20, 1999 and Associated Press, April 19, 1999.) How did he know, then, three weeks earlier, that "the genocide had begun?"

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3. Associated Press, April 16, 1999; and see "Fussball mit den Köpfen der Opfer," *Berliner Kurier,* April 17, 1999. In a similar register, German Minister of Foreign Affairs Joschka Fischer remarked that the Serbs were even taking away the toys of Albanian children—before himself returning to the "Holocaust" allusions by describing the flight of Albanian refugees from the region as a "deportation." See "Serben nehmen Kinder sogar ihr Spielzeug weg," *Berliner Kurier,* April 4, 1999. As will be seen further on in the main text, Scharping's "soccer" atrocity story was not exactly original.
4. In fact, though the identity of the victims has changed, the "Holocaust" association has been a standard trope of anti-Serb propaganda at least since 1992 and the first reports of alleged "deathcamps" in Bosnia. On the twisted history of such reports, see, for example, Peter Brock, "Dateline Yugoslavia," *Foreign Policy,* no. 93, Winter 1993-94; Jacques Merlino, *Les vérités yougoslaves ne sont pas toutes bonnes à dire* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993), pp. 125-32; and Thomas Deichmann, "The Picture that Fooled the World" in *NATO in the Balkans* (New York: International Action Center, 1998).
5. On the process of exclusion of the German Jews under National Socialism, see Karl Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1970); Wolfgang Wipperman and Michael Burleigh, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), ch. 4; and Avraham Barkai, *From Boycott to Annihilation: the Economic Struggle of the German Jews, 1933-1943* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989). More generally, on the history of German citizenship law and the *ius sanguinis,* see Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).
6. In fact the decree's derivation of the status of the "half-Jew" with two "Aryan" parents involves a classic example of the *reductio ad absurdum.* According to the decree, a "half-Jew" with two "Aryan" parents—unlike a "half-Jew" with one "Jewish" and one "Aryan" parent—would not count as a "Jew." But by definition the "half-Jew" must have two "Jewish" grandparents. Hence *one* of the grandparents of each of the parents of the "half-Jew" who does not have one "Jewish" and one "Aryan" parent (i.e., who has two "Aryan" parents) must him- or herself be "Jewish." But by definition of the law, a "half-Jew" one of whose parents is "Jewish" is a "Jew." Hence the "Aryan" parents must be "Jewish."
7. Indeed, inasmuch as the Federal Republic recognizes claims to German nationality based on the collective naturalizations of putative ethnic Germans in the occupied territories undertaken by the Nazi regime, the 1913 law is still today interpreted through the lens of its radicalization by the National Socialists.
8. The revised version of the citizenship law reform, passed by the two houses of the German parliament in May, will ascribe German citizenship to children born in Germany of "foreign" parents for, in effect, a probationary period. By the age of 23, such "foreign children born in Germany" must decide between retaining their German passport or a passport issued by their parents' presumed ethnic-national "homeland" (thus, for example, Turkey for persons of presumed Turkish ancestry, whether or not they were themselves born there). In an analogous fashion, candidates for naturalization will under "normal" circumstances be required to renounce the citizenship of their countries of origin. Under present conditions, this refusal of so-called "dual-citizenship" will create serious disincentives for both these categories of prospective citizens. In any event, the reformed version of German citizenship law, like the hitherto existing law it replaces, remains implicitly racist and discriminatory, since it does not in principle or in fact deny the possibility of "dual-citizenship" to "German nationals," i.e., putatively ethnic Germans. German law distinguishes between the latter [*deutsche Volkszugehörige*] and German citizens [*deutsche Staatsangehörige*], and guarantees "na-

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tionals" the right, supposing they were born in Germany, to acquire the citizenship of another country without foregoing their German citizenship, and the right, supposing they were born elsewhere, to acquire German citizenship without foregoing the citizenship of their country of origin.

9. Though here too, it must be said, there are parallels. Thus, in 1997, Germany's so-called "Foreigner Law" was revised such as to require that children under sixteen who are not citizens of an EU member state obtain a visa in order to travel to Germany to join parents living there. Given the peculiarities of existing German citizenship law, this stipulation applies, among others, to German Turkish children *born* in Germany who happen in the meanwhile to have traveled abroad. In other words, these children must currently apply for a visa in order to be able to *return home.* At least as concerns children *henceforth* born in Germany, this particular anomaly should be eliminated with the citizenship law reform.
10. Formally considered, the 1935 Citizenship Law did not quite complete this process, since while it deprived the German Jews of citizenship [*Reichsbürgerschaft*], it continued to attribute to them the subordinate status of "state members" [*Staatsangehörige*]. The German Jews lost even this latter status upon "taking up residence" in a foreign country—even if this came to pass by way of deportation. See Brubaker, pp. 167-168. The distinction between *Bürgerschaft* and *Staatsangehörigkeit* does not, incidentally, exist in current German law, which is why in this latter context both the one and the other can be translated without further ado as "citizenship." (See note 8.) Apart from the rare cases of naturalized citizens, German Turks do not even enjoy the status of "state members." Their status is quite simply that of foreigners legally resident in Germany.
11. In fact, having been pressured to emigrate in the years leading up to the war, a relatively smaller percentage of German Jews were murdered by the Nazi regime than European Jews in general; and the German Jewish victims of the regime represent only a small percentage (just over 2 percent) of the total number of Jews murdered.
12. It has also become acceptable, for instance, in the halls of the German Bundestag where, since 1992, sessions devoted to Balkan politics have featured constant references to "genocide" by representatives of all parties except the post-Communist PDS.
13. See *Le Figaro,* January 20, 1999; "Les morts de Racak ont-ils vraiment été massacrés froidement?," *Le monde,* January 21, 1999; and "Racak: les victimes 'tuées par balles à distance, selon des legistes'," Agence France-Press, February 23, 1999. Photos provided to the press by Rudolf Scharping in late April, and allegedly documenting another Serb-orchestrated "massacre" from January, clearly depict fallen combatants, complete with cartridge-belts, automatic weapons, and KLA insignias on their uniforms. The news agency Reuters responded to Scharping's supposed "revelation" by indicating that it had already published photos of the scene and that the dead were KLA guerrilla. See "'Massaker schon vor Rambouillet'," April 28, 1999, *Berliner Zeitung.* Interestingly, in a recent interview with *Le monde,* French Minister of Defense Alain Richard casually remarks that the NATO attack was "organized starting in autumn 1998," a date which suggests that NATO was not in any case responding to internal events in Kosovo. See "Instaurer des critère de convergence peut inciter efficacement des Etats européens à une défense commune," *Le monde,* July 14, 1999.
14. See, for example, "No Bodies at Rumored Grave Site in Kosovo," Reuters, October 12, 1999. Immediately after the cessation of hostilities in June, ten thousand was the figure which began to circulate as representing the number of Albanians killed by Serb forces after the inception of NATO bombing. But even supposing this figure were to withstand scrutiny as a general casualty figure, who can honestly say that every body found is that of an Albanian, rather than of a Serb or Roma or ethnic Turk? And does the mere discovery

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of a body tell us who did the killing and under what circumstances? Again, there is no question that the KLA has in the past itself conducted reprisals against ethnic Albanians who refused to cooperate with it. In early August, Bernard Kouchner raised the figure to eleven thousand, claiming to cite information gathered by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia—which quickly denied that this was its estimate. (See *Le monde*, August 4, 1999.) KLA militants are evidently less discrete than UN "high representatives" when discussing the origins of Kosovo's war-dead. Thus the KLA appointed "mayor" of the town of Malicevo, reflecting upon the battles that took place in the area, casually remarked to a French reporter: "We had 300 dead, but the Serbs lost at least twice as many ...." See "Les soldats russes subissent la vindicte des Albanais," *Le monde*, August 3, 1999.

15. The reason for the cautiousness of my formulation here is that it is not clear that the prerogatives enjoyed by the Kosovo Albanians under the 1974 Constitution were the result of any generally recognized "right." The Serbian "autonomous provinces" of Kosovo and Voivodina had an exceptional status within the Federation; although Republics besides Serbia also comprised territories in which "nationalities" other than the "titular" ones (as in the "Croatian nationality" in Croatia or the "Macedonian" in Macedonia) constituted the local majority, none of these territories was accorded autonomy.
16. For a detailed discussion of "minority rights" and the logic of ethnic-national state-building in the Balkans, see Robert Hayden, *Blueprints for a House Divided: the Constitutional Logic of the Yugoslav Conflicts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999). Specifically on Bosnia-Herzegovina, see Part 2.
17. On the foregoing, see Barkai, ch. 2.
18. The full text of the letter is reproduced in Max Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen* (Neustadt: Verlagsdruckerei Schmidt, 1962), pp. 916-918. Hitler intentionally wrote "Tschechoslowakei" with a hyphen as "Tschecho-Slowakei", in order to emphasize the "ethnographic" distinctness of its "Czech" and "Slovak" components.
19. See Engelbert Schwerzenbeck, *N-S Pressepolitik und die Sudetenkrise 1938* (Munich: Minerva, 1979), pp. 356 and 362.
20. See Domarus, p. 904.
21. See Ernst Nittner, ed., *Dokumente zur Sudetendeutschen Frage* (Munich: Ackermann-Gemeinde, 1967).
22. Carl Schmitt, *Völkerrechtliche Grossraumordnung* (Berlin-Wien: Deutscher Rechtsverlag, 1939), p. 88.

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Remembering Murray Levin

by Howard Zinn

I suspect that many on the U.S. left do not know the name of Murray Levin—political scientist, writer, teacher—who died at the age of seventy-two in late 1999. It would be hard to characterize his politics in simple terms; "socialist," "radical," "progressive?" In the thirty-five years I knew him, including twenty-four years as his close friend and colleague at Boston University, there was never any occasion to describe him in any of those ways.

One thing, however, can be stated with confidence: Murray Levin made an important contribution to the radical movement in this country—by what he wrote, how he taught, and how he behaved as a dissident intellectual in the world of academe.

Nothing in his early background would lead one to predict the trajectory of his political ideas. He came from a successful business family with a Harvard tradition. But when he attended Harvard College, the lectures of the political scientist

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Louis Hartz made a powerful impression on him. Hartz, whose ideas are best expressed in his book *The Liberal Tradition in America*, saw the absence of the feudal experience in this country as limiting the boundaries of political thought. What Hartz called "Lockian liberalism" meant that the United States would stay safely within the liberal tradition. He clearly was critical of that tradition. Murray Levin, for the rest of his life, refused to accept the orthodoxy of American liberalism—its pretensions to democracy, justice, equality.

Murray, after a stint in the Navy—it was the time of the Korean War and the draft was in effect—became a graduate student in political science at Columbia University. There he came into contact with the ideas of Franz Neumann, a refugee from Hitler's Germany, a political theorist, and a powerful analyst of Fascist ideology. The European political theorists were heavily influenced by Marxism, and Murray became interested in Marxist thought. His doctoral dissertation was on the philosophical antecedents of Marx's political economy.

After teaching briefly at City College and Columbia, he joined the department of political science at Boston University. When I joined the department in 1964, Murray and I immediately became friends. He knew that I had just moved up from the South, where I taught at Spelman College in Atlanta and became involved in the Southern civil rights movement. Murray's views on the race question were unmistakable and powerful. And now, with the incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin, American intervention in Vietnam was becoming massive. Here too, Murray's instincts were unambiguous.

He was already a legend at Boston University, as one of the most popular teachers in its history. Every year he taught the required introductory course in American Politics to a thousand students, who crowded into Hayden Hall to hear him lecture. He was a colorful speaker—a giant of a man, bearded, formidable in appearance—who expressed his ideas with utter confidence. For students just out of traditional high schools, most of them the sons and daughters of upper middle-class business and professional parents, Murray Levin's scathing critique of American political institutions came as a shock. It

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was a rough awakening from the self-congratulation of orthodox political science, which could find flaws in the system but fundamentally saw this country as "the city on the hill"—the democratic hope of the world. His students came away from his course shaken but open-eyed. His teaching would be remembered by tens of thousands of students, over his thirty-five years of teaching, as the high point of their political education.

Murray had no illusions about the totalitarian states, left and right, but he did not make the jump in logic that concluded that this country represented the only viable alternative. Many American liberals climbed on the anti-Communist bandwagon of the fifties (identifying Marxism with Stalinism), proclaimed "the end of ideology," and raced for a safe haven in "the vital center." Murray, like C. Wright Mills, saw "the city on the hill" as corrupted by racism, economic inequality, imperialist adventures.

In 1960, Murray's first book, *The Alienated Voter,* anticipated what would become a critical theme in American political science for the next several decades—the deep estrangement from the political system of at least half of its citizens. In the presidential election of that year, between Kennedy and Nixon, voting reached a high of 60 percent of eligible voters. But from that point on, the percentages kept decreasing, until barely half the electorate went to the polls. This illustrated—with startling clarity—the phenomenon that Murray Levin had described. The alienation, Murray insisted, was not the result of superficial factors which could be easily modified, but came from deep flaws in the American system itself.

Although his political instincts were impeccably radical, Murray had never been involved in political movements before. But by the mid-1960s—as with so many others in academe—both the civil rights movement and the antiwar movement propelled him into action. He was a featured speaker at antiwar rallies and teach-ins, marched in demonstrations, walked on picket lines. This was not pleasing to the Boston University administration, especially after 1971, when the tyrannical John Silber, who had a special fondness for the military and the police, became university president. But Murray never wavered.

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Despite his huge teaching load (which included advanced courses on American political ideas and Marxist philosophy), as well as his political involvement, Murray never stopped writing. He wrote several iconoclastic books on Edward Kennedy—refusing to go along with the reverence of so many liberals in Massachusetts for the Kennedy clan. His book *Political Hysteria in America: the Democratic Capacity for Repression* was in many ways an ideological companion to Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* in its puncturing of the myth of American tolerance.

While the war was raging in Vietnam, Boston University itself became a battlefield, with student demonstrators and faculty supporters on one side and the administration of John Silber on the other. Silber was ruthless in dealing with opposition. For student demonstrators, he was quick to call the police. Faculty faced the kind of punishment overbearing administrators can deal out: if untenured, they had little hope of getting tenure, whatever their record in scholarship and teaching; if tenured, raises in salary were withheld.

Murray, long tenured, with a distinguished record in teaching and publications, saw his salary held down again and again. But he never wavered in his outspoken opposition to what was becoming more and more of a police state at Boston University: censorship of student newspapers, intimidation of activist students, the taking of photos of faculty and students who walked on picket lines. The Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts issued a report on Boston University, saying it had never before received so many complaints of violations of free speech about any other institution in the state.

The campus conflict came to a head over the refusal of the Silber Administration to recognize the newly formed American Association of University Professors (AAUP) faculty union, the District 65 union representing secretaries and clerical workers, the union of library workers. While resisting decent salaries for secretaries, Silber was raising his own salary year after year by huge increments, until he was getting more than the presidents of Harvard, MIT, Yale, Princeton—indeed, he became the highest paid university president in the country.

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And his captive Board of Trustees, which faculty came to see as a politburo doing the dictator's bidding, was giving Silber special bonuses and real estate deals.

In a National Labor Review Board (NLRB) election, the faculty voted to unionize. But after a contract was negotiated, Silber reneged and, in an unprecedented action, the faculty went out on strike. Picket lines went up immediately in front of all the major buildings on campus. Murray Levin was a stalwart of the union. Our radical corner of the political science department consisted of Murray, myself, and Frances Fox Piven—and we all became heavily involved in strike activities. The secretaries, their union still unrecognized, within days went out on strike, and the streets around Boston University now saw a rare sight in academe—faculty and secretaries walking the picket lines together in solidarity.

When the faculty accepted an administration offer of a contract and went back to work, with the secretaries still on strike, a number of teachers refused to cross the secretaries' picket line. Five of us—including Murray Levin—were immediately charged with violating the no-strike clause of the faculty contract and were threatened with dismissal. The case of "The BU Five" became notorious and aroused national—even international—protest. The heat became so intense that Silber finally dropped the charges.

Murray Levin retired from Boston University in 1997, but he could not give up teaching. He began teaching black high school students in Roxbury. The kids loved him. He devised all sorts of imaginative ways to begin discussions with them about important political ideas. He took them out for hamburgers and cokes and talked with them about their lives. He tape-recorded hundreds of hours of their ruminations, persuading them that their ideas about the world were important. These experiences went into his book *Teach Me: Kids Will Learn When Oppression Is the Lesson* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998).

Murray married late, in his fifties, and when his wife Helen—already the mother of three children from her first marriage—bore his child, it was the happiest event of his life. He was a wonderful father; he and Josh were inseparable pals. I think

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that he would not have bonded so beautifully with the kids in Roxbury were it not for this new exciting experience of fatherhood.

Josh was fourteen when Murray, long plagued by heart trouble, died. At the funeral service, Josh delivered the most eloquent and touching of eulogies—expressing his love for his father and recalling incident after funny incident involving Murray. For Murray had a wonderful sense of humor—it was an important part of his rapport with young people, whether privileged and white or black and poor. To be with him was always great fun.

I thought it important to bring Murray Levin to the attention of people who did not know him—who did not know of his political steadfastness in the cause of justice and who did not have the enjoyment of spending time with this wonderful teacher, this acute social critic, this delightful, exuberant human being.

"Using armored vehicles, tear gas—which even made the delegations staying in hotels queasy—and, on top of that, pepper gas. Brutal methods, dragging people through the streets. Six hundred arrested. What would happen if such behavior took place in Cuba? What would they say if they saw an army, the National Guard, occupying the city? Tons of masked men with horrifying outfits to scare people, thousands of police in all directions, men being dragged, horses and other animals to attack people? They would say that it was a flagrant and massive violation of human rights and that, therefore, they had to use the NATO formula to conduct a 'humanitarian' intervention."

—Fidel Castro, receiving the Cuban delegation upon its return from Seattle

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Subversion and Scholarship

by Robert Engler

The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years (New York: The New Press, 1997), 260 pp., $25.

As the title suggests, this book is a collection of the reflections of well-known scholars on the ways in which their careers and institutions (as well as teaching and research directions in their disciplines) were affected by the postwar political climate in the United States. The contributions are uneven, but the cumulative accounts shed piercing light on the impact of the Cold War.

Yale labor historian David Montgomery recalls an idyllic undergraduate life at Swarthmore in the years immediately following the Second World War. War, peace, and the big issues of political economy were freely debated, as were alternative paths for basic social change. A decade later, after a stint as a machinist, he found universities joining in the celebration of the American century and heralding productivity as the key to global development. But along with other contributors, he saw

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also that the bottom-up social criticism triggered by the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements was invigorating the campus and the nation.

R.C. Lewontin, Harvard zoologist and biologist, is less sanguine. The Cold War may have ended, he says, but (just as government investment once helped pull the nation through depression and war), its emerging permanent mobilization for war now injected fresh federal money into the university. This spurred academic planners to renew their expansionist dreams. Some professors' roles as conduits of funds for their schools made them "independent entrepreneurs." They began to attend more meetings and become consultants, foundation advisers, and institute directors. As a result, they worked *in* but not *for* the university. Autonomous inquiry became less prevalent, as research opportunities were integrated into the national economy. Academics were no longer simply emulating the lifestyles of a business class, as Thorstein Veblen had observed. If the majority of the teaching community were placed on the high road to professional prosperity, others were dragged to their crucifixion along the same *via Dolorosa* during the Cold War. The opportunism of individual politicians, as well as the cowardice of university trustees, administrators, and some colleagues, was critical in the implementation of federal security concerns.

Howard Zinn, emeritus historian at Boston University, reports how teaching and research in his profession, with some significant dissent, marched to a patriotic drumbeat and supported both world wars and the crusade against communism. Consensus history dominated, as did bipartisan foreign policy. Self-censorship kept questions and analyses within carefully drawn bounds. Zinn cites the 1954 Samuel Stouffer opinion survey, which found that 52 percent of the people polled favored imprisonment for all communists. He recounts how M.I. Finley was fired by Rutgers despite his obvious achievements and promise as a scholar. Finley had freely answered questions (put to him by the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee) about his own activities while a graduate student at Columbia, but refused to talk about others. As one board

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member explained, with 60 percent of the budget coming from the state, the university could not "offend public opinion." Finley moved to Cambridge University, where his studies of the ancient world earned widespread respect. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. played a contrasting role, serving as a kind of court historian during the Kennedy administration and the invasion of Cuba.

English studies garnered a few crumbs from the "overhead" that universities exacted while serving the "national interest." Richard Ohmann of Wesleyan University portrays the department of literature as a pastoral retreat during the virulent years of the Cold War. While assaults on the business system, and disdain for know-nothingism and the cruder forms of anticommunism, were commonplace in literary circles and writing, the increasing focus upon "culture" was kept apart from "society," as Raymond Williams noted. Social conflicts were often trivialized and popular participation in the shaping of events rarely occupied center stage. Fascination with the new criticism and deconstructionism further distanced literary studies from broader analyses of the social order. Apolitical and ahistorical approaches became more dominant, abetting the mystification of power and its locus. There was heightened awareness of the penalties exacted by the universities and society as a whole if one failed to show deference to prevailing public policies. Professional associations sometimes collaborated with intelligence and security agencies; more often, they were silent in the face of evidence of the ways that such state and school practices affected colleagues. Foundations hesitated to support projects and persons viewed as potentially radical. Yet despite the many threats to academic freedom, Ohmann is encouraged by the struggles over civil rights, women's studies, ecology, and the claims of "minority" cultures for time in the literary sun. Literature is now a major battlefield, not likely to resume its place as genteel sanctuary.

Anthropology has been heavily compromised. A sweeping indictment by Laura Nader of the University of California, Berkeley, cites the fact that leading figures and institutes solicit and accept funding associations with national security agen-

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cies and private corporations. This helps to explain why, for so long, so many anthropologists have shied away from critical analyses of the discipline and its relation to the overall structure of power of U.S. security. The willingness of some to engage in covert research in support of counterinsurgency, and what are loosely known as development programs for emerging nations, underscores the absence of any responsible professional standards that might help academics say, "no thanks."

Reflecting on changes in earth and planetary research, Raymond Siever of Harvard University reports that fewer scientists are now the traditional loners—essentially apolitical, with modest budgets (frequently from their own pockets). Big science has brought big bucks and enhanced professional reputations. A global network of seismic stations, plate tectonic theory bolstered by systematic observations by oceanographic research vessels, and isotopic (nuclear) geochemistry were stimulated by wartime and Cold War support. The Star Wars program, backed by some scientists and many in Congress, is essentially Cold War pork. Even people opposed to such ventures as the Vietnam War have accepted Defense Department dollars commingled with other grants. Commercialization of the academy, Siever says, "seems to be most widespread in the expanding biotech industry." In contrast, he suspects that actual engagement in ecological research is quite limited, despite almost universal deference to its significance. It is difficult to examine the environment seriously without asking questions about manmade institutions, whose power is so unaccountably involved in the reshaping of the globe and the universe. I recall a visiting space scientist who, seeking to awaken an audience of Princeton science students to the romance of space exploration, said, "There is prime real estate out there waiting to be developed."

A seasoned dissenter and international activist, MIT linguist Noam Chomsky affirms that his speeches and writings, critical of the warfare state and its imperialism, have never been an issue at "Pentagon University." Indeed, he cites the Pentagon as probably the freest of all agencies in its willingness to back long-range and open-ended scientific projects. But by subsi-

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dizing basic research for advanced sectors of the economy (like electronics and computers), the Pentagon has been serving as a cover for planning private industrial policy. And as corporate financing increases on campus, Chomsky warns, so does secrecy. Troubled by the U.S. imperium and the corporate mask of globalization, Chomsky challenges academic and public intellectuals—highly privileged groups—to resist the corruption of learning and the erosion of political democracy. There are personal risks, yes, but in a relatively free society, they have not been great risks for most.

Immanuel Wallerstein correlates shifts in language, regional, and global studies with changing priorities in foreign policy and private investment. University administrators are alert to unclaimed areas for which specialists attractive to the diplomatic services, the military, and multinational corporations can be trained. (In a recent address at the Johns Hopkins School of International Studies, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott paid tribute to the scholarship and public education of its new Central Asia Institute. Noting such factors as the presence of perhaps two hundred billion barrels of oil in the Caucasus and Central Asia, he declared: "You have already made an important contribution to the American national interest.") Wallerstein, who is a scholar at Binghamton, perceives a shared assumption in Asian and anthropological research: that the people under the microscope have been essentially non-historical, their cultures timeless or frozen in time (at least until coming into contact with the modernizing forces of the industrial world). Once, these scholars identified themselves as sympathetic interpreters. Now, the scepticism of nationalist movements about their field work has prompted re-examination of their missions and methods.

Ira Katznelson of Columbia University traces the efforts of some political scientists to secure "the liberal option" in the United States. The Cold War had intensified the urgency to redefine and then publicly champion an appropriate theory of political democracy. This defense, along with articulated rules of the game concerning elites, interest groups, and popular involvement, might strengthen a "moderated" politi-

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cal system's ability to maintain stability. It might also contain the feared vulnerability of ill-informed masses, at home and abroad, to the blandishments of the left and the right. He draws upon David Truman's *The Governmental Process* (1951), which offered a contemporary pluralist model of how competing forces operate within the political process. Citizens are heard, groups interact with one another, and elites rule responsibly. The empirical approach so vital to political science is infused with moral purpose. Katznelson recognizes that race, (unspecified) social movements, and the emerging national security state are slighted. But his own analysis, as presented in the book, ignores gross discrepancies in economic power that undermine political democracy. And to say that the university and the Cold War were entwined, without spelling out more clearly how the contours of his discipline were shaped by the retrofitting of liberalism for perilous times, leaves the argument hanging. Was the Cold War the major stimulus for this concern? After all, debates over the places of masses and classes have been perennial in American historiography. Are there more complex explanations? *The Cold War and the University* does not venture very far into questions about the origins of the Cold War; it is treated as a given.

The heady postwar expansion of the university featured enrollments stimulated by the G.I. Bill, the creation of new institutes, and the recruitment of faculty adept at grant-writing. The wartime faith in science as the new frontier readily carried over into peacetime. The prospect of productive research in prestigious settings attracted corporate donors. University presidents—Veblen's captains of erudition—were busy orchestrating their swelled constituencies and overseeing extensive property and investments. It seemed expedient to assure the public of their vigilance against communism and the inviolability of "the American way of life," at least on their campuses. Not many presidential addresses defended the proposition that intellectual freedom suggests the rigorous examination of all ideas and institutions and, hence, the inherently subversive nature of scholarship.

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Certainly, independent research and teaching are found in both relatively obscure and better-known universities. Academic life offers greater latitude to pursue "idle curiosity" than do most other settings, especially for those who have "made it." There are also programs that encourage linking one's scholarship to urgent social needs; progressive welfare, tax, and regulatory reforms have had their origins in such places. While no claim is made that the Cold War bore sole responsibility for the demise of a (probably mythical) golden age of learning, running through these essays is an unarticulated question: why can't an American university be more of a center for meaningful intellectual inquiry and public discourse?

The rewards of the system tend to favor those who keep their scholarship compartmentalized, better able to fit into departmental slots. Younger faculty may be liberal or even radical today, willing to speak out on public issues. But people who choose the academy are likely to accept the order within which specialities, hierarchies, and salaries function. Lengthy apprenticeships and anxiety-producing climbs through the ranks invite caution rather than daring, deference rather than independence. However much talent is conceded, a judgment of "unsound" may outweigh references, publications, and promise. And there can be unease about junior colleagues involved in off-campus controversy.

Intellectual autonomy has never consistently been the transcendent beacon that guides colleges and universities. There has been a range of expectations for what have been referred to (perhaps generously) as institutions of higher learning. Schools were founded for specific purposes: support of churches whose fundamental truths are not in doubt, the modernization of agriculture and mining, or the mobilization of an army of teachers to induct millions into the workforce and citizenship. Business schools have trained technicians and managers sought by industrial and postindustrial firms. Economics programs in liberal arts and graduate schools often reflect a comparable orientation. Professional preparation for such fields as law, journalism, public administration, and social work draws upon analytical thinking, but critical and creative

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faculties are not highlighted as the surest ground for entry. Few schools are as blunt as Hofstra University, whose full-page advertisements proclaim: "We teach success." But most schools want to send the message that they teach marketable skills.

Undergraduate education emphasizes established concepts and bodies of knowledge. Exposure to the career demands of the "real world" often dominates. The assumptions that there is a certain amount of knowledge to be acquired, and that students' heads are for filling, leave minimum time for speculation beyond the bounds of the known and accepted. Capitalism is generally a given in economics and other social sciences. Political science tends to focus heavily upon structures and procedures of formal political institutions, and international relations often resembles chess, with limited analysis of the social forces behind the moves. National honor, national interest, national security, and now national credibility are among the explanations for cloaking.

The sizable cost for students, parents, and taxpayers intensifies the pressure for "relevance." The arts and humanities, even where respected, are often relegated to mass lectures, textbooks, and inexpensive teaching assistants. Respect for good writing and love of good literature are diminished, as is the concept of an educated person. Few are encouraged to hammer out for themselves a sense of history and purpose; one is forced to concede that "I just work here." Instead of using time—the most precious offering of the university—to understand such forces as technology and alternatives for its control, acquisition of credentials becomes paramount.

While no mention is made of *The Dissenting Academy* (1967), a predecessor to this volume (also initiated by André Schiffrin, who then headed Pantheon Books), the current study broadens the range of fields discussed and focuses attention to the Cold War. In his preface, the editor expresses disappointment at how little fresh material he found on the campuses he visited. But, he says, he hopes that these autobiographical accounts will stimulate others to dig deeply in their own bailiwicks for future publication. Analyzing the work of specific research centers would be valuable, as would reports from

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less-publicized campuses (public, private, and denominational), including the perceptions of former students. Documentation of what happens when corporations come to campus and how foundations relate to scholarship could be illuminating.

Given the range of experiences presented, the absence of any overall interpretation is understandable. Yet a conclusion as to the ways that Cold War practices have become entrenched in the academy would be helpful, and a discussion of the kinds of resistance strategies necessary would also be valuable, if the goals of the university remain intellectual integrity and creativity. If these values are to be more than the privilege of the priesthood, are there ways in which the university can serve the larger community, without becoming an appendage of the state, the corporation, or other private interests? Certainly, greater attention to the concept of "public intellectual" is desirable. While much of academic activity is intellectual, the ease with which the book slips from "academic" to "intellectual" needs elaboration. Lastly, one hopes to see studies of the roles of the mass media, book publishing, and the performing arts in the modification of public understanding of basic American principles during the Cold War.

from a reader:

Apropos your noting that Karl Marx topped the BBC poll for "the thinker of the millennium," your readers will be interested in knowing that Marx also did well in "The Jerusalem Report" readers' poll of the "Greatest Jews of the Millennium." Here Karl came in at #13, between Anne Frank and Sandy Koufax, but the really good news is that socialist Albert Einstein came in 1st. Dylan and Chomsky came in at #44 and #45, beating out "briefly Jewish" Marilyn Monroe (#48). Trotsky ended up five places behind Marilyn, and 42 places ahead of Marilyn's ex-husband, Arthur Miller. Rosa Luxembourg came in at #89 and Abbie Hoffman scored at #100. My two major disappointments were that Kissinger (#37) was even allowed on the list and that Groucho didn't make it. Best wishes for the last year of the millennium.

—*Maynard Seider*

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More Than Entertainment

by Paul Street

Neal Gabler, *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 244 pp., $27.50; out in paperback in March 2000, 320 pp., $14.

Neal Gabler's *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality* is a sophisticated, erudite, and appalling book. It is at once an elegant reflection on media power and a depressing testament to the U.S. intelligentsia's moral detachment and related refusal to think seriously about how the business class controls the public mind. Gabler argues that "Karl Marx and Joseph Schumpeter both seem to have been wrong. It is not any ism but entertainment that is arguably the most pervasive, powerful, and ineluctable force of our time—a force so overwhelming that it has finally metastasized into life." The central ethos of our entertainment age, reflected in and fed by our

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vast media apparatus, is, says Gabler, the "expectation that everything should provide pleasure."

It's not just that the media provides an avenue for avoiding unpleasantness. They force "nearly everything to turn itself into entertainment" in order to be noticed. Ordinary people turn themselves into pretend media personalities—celebrity wannabes—leading pseudo lives scripted by the entertainment industry. In what Gabler calls "the single most important cultural transformation in this country in the 20th century," all of us have become "performance artists in and audiences for a grand, ongoing show." According to Gabler, this media-orchestrated circus has relegated ideology and meaningful discussion of policy issues to Marx's proverbial dustbin of history. It all marks, for Gabler, a historic defeat for traditional intellectuals—the manifestation of "Plato's worst nightmare: the triumph of the sense over the mind, of emotion over reason, of the id over the superego, of Dionysian abandon over Apollonian harmony." (All of which Gabler basically endorses for what he thinks are "democratic" reasons.)

Contrary to the conventional claim that modern cinema and television technologies created Americans' obsession with amusement, Gabler sees the rise of the entertainment state as the expression of basic human instincts—including a taste for pleasure over reality—that found their purest expression in the United States because of its democratic social and political traditions. The latest technological medium, he insists, was "only a symptom ... the cause was the public's hunger for entertainment"—a natural human appetite unleashed most powerfully in the rough and tumble United States.

Gabler refuses to condemn what he describes as the victory of media-induced pseudo reality over a clear-eyed grasp of real experience. In his view, the position of Neil Postman, who argues that modern media is "amusing" Americans "to [cultural] death," is no more tenable than that of "post-realists," who see the entertainment state as a desirable step toward "a world where we need never suffer life's hurts again." These conflicting perspectives are part, Gabler thinks, of an ongoing "debate between humaneness and happiness"—a "contro-

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versy similar to the one over Prozac"—to which there are "no simple answers." The Marxist position on media does not exist in Gabler's view of the relevant debate.

Media critics of the left could profit from grappling with *Life the Movie.* Radicals do an excellent job of showing that the media manufactures consent by censoring news and editorial content along the thought-control lines prophesied for state media in George Orwell's *1984.* Equally dark in its meaning for the fate of the republic, however, is the media beyond the news—the mass culture of sensation and celebrity that makes it more and more difficult for people to think and live in the rational, authentic, and reality-based sorts of ways that democratic politics require. Here the more relevant dystopia is Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World,* in which the authority figures had no reason to ban books, since no one wanted to read them.

Still, Gabler has more to learn from radicals than he can teach them. *Life the Movie* is deeply flawed by the author's indifference to questions of ownership and ideology that rightly preoccupy left critics. His argument that pure entertainment has displaced ideology ignores the highly ideological and capitalist content of U.S. entertainment media. Among the conservative ideas that recur in movies and shows that, incredibly, register for Gabler the victory of "popular" over "elite" culture are the notions that individual effort is superior to group solidarity, that "free enterprise" capitalism is the best possible economic system, and that societal ills are the product of individual malfeasance rather than underlying structural forces. Equally ubiquitous in our "popular" (actually corporate) culture are the ideas that human beings are inherently competitive and prone to seek individual gain over social good, that upper middle-class professionals and businesspeople are more interesting and worthy than blue-collar and service workers and the poor, and that U.S. foreign and military policies are directed towards democratic ideals and are a necessary civilizing and defensive force against foreign savagery, backwardness, and aggression. U.S. entertainment regularly advances the idea that law enforcement needs and deserves a freer hand in its contest with a mass of crazed

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criminals. The media mocks people who protest existing social hierarchies as deluded neurotics (if not lunatics) and portrays labor unions as corrupt, antidemocratic institutions that working people would do best to avoid.

At the same time, the leading capitalist media has, since the 1960s, curiously aligned itself with and profited from countercultural rebellion against the bourgeois establishment. This corporate "conquest of cool" (left business and culture historian Thomas Frank's excellent phrase) is displayed in clever advertisements in which anarchic youth undertake "hip" resistance to "square" authority figures and puritanical ideals by purchasing supposedly liberating products (from Nike shoes to the latest software) and services (on-line trading) provided, ironically enough, by repressive and authoritarian corporations.

As Robert Cirino put it more than twenty years ago, "we're being more than entertained." Besides diverting people from the difficult and fateful questions of their time, the media sells the products, services, lifestyles, and values of modern capitalism.

None of this should surprise anyone who examines media ownership. Fewer than ten giant corporations now control the majority of America's electronic and print media—a most unpleasant fact that apparently has no entertainment (or other) value for Neal Gabler since it receives no mention in *Life the Movie.*

Gabler's indifference to the issue of corporate media control flows logically from his "supply and demand" argument that escapist media content is and always has been "what the people want." Yet how can Gabler claim to know that, in the United States, people truly prefer sensationalist media escape over serious media engagement with real life when they are rarely exposed to the latter for reasons of ownership and ideology? Movies celebrating workers and unions were once widely available and well attended. But as historian Stephen Ross shows in his excellent *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (1998), the founding Hollywood studios "abandoned old themes of class conflict in favor of making films that promoted a conservative vision of class harmony; films that *shifted attention away from the problems of the*

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workplace and toward the pleasures of the new consumer society [emphasis added]."

Maybe people don't so much *get what they want* as come to *want what they get* from the corporate entertainment state. If the news provided authentic and democratic reflections of (and on) social reality rather than biased, profit-driven propaganda (like Orwell), then peoples' allegedly inherent thirst for escapist entertainment (like Huxley) might be less pronounced and their taste for serious reflection enhanced. If people in the United States learned more from "their" media about the heroic real life struggles of, say, activist workers and peasants in Latin America, they might be less inclined to model their lives on the antics (both on- and off-screen) of privileged Hollywood exhibitionists. If the producers of media dramas did not have to veer away from sensitive issues like class privilege and U.S. global aggression, then perhaps more shows and movies could impart a critical sense of social and political reality while providing a dose of entertainment.

Gabler's not-so-democratic reluctance to criticize what he considers to be the triumph of a "post-reality" entertainment ethos makes sense in light of his related moral and intellectual blind spots. Lacking an appropriate sense of existing power, property, and class relations, Gabler misses the ways in which the "make-believe media" (Michael Parenti's excellent phrase) deepen the pain and weakness of ordinary Americans, for whom escape from life's hurts into unreal states of entertainment is no more useful or enduring than escape through alcohol or drugs. This is a major shortcoming of the book, reflecting an ethical disengagement common among culture critics writing in a postmodern vein. By censoring information, encouraging escapism, and propagating authoritarian and divisive ideas, the corporate media neither serves nor reflects the needs of the people. It also undercuts the democratic traditions that Gabler knows to be an essential and valuable legacy of nineteenth-century America.

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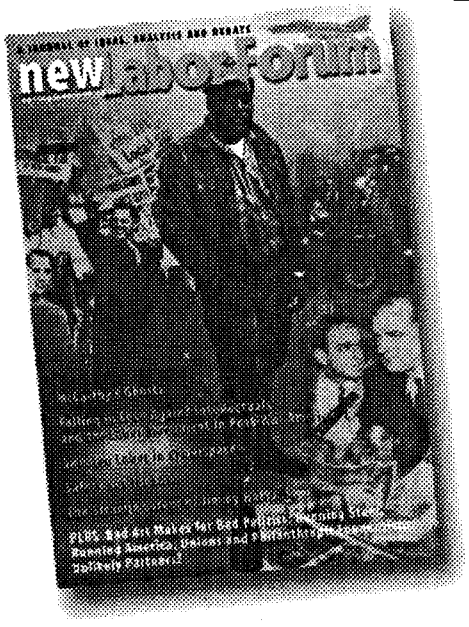

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In those conditions, committed internationalists have often felt compelled to set aside all their fears about the dangerous consequences of nationalism, and ethnic nationalism in particular—their fears not just about the installation of a new, national, system of class domination but also about the destructive impulses generated by divisive ethnic exclusivity. So, like Isaac Deutscher, socialists have often worn gloves in dealing with the national question, in solidarity with the oppressed and for fear of giving aid and comfort to the oppressor.

It's hard to go beyond these generalities without considering historical particulars. Besides, we have to keep in mind the ways in which the world has changed since the major socialist debates on the national question. Consider, for instance, the historical moment in the wake of the First World War, when some of the most heated controversies about the national question first erupted. This was a moment in which the issue of nationalism was mainly shaped by the collapse of the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg empires, the ferment of national movements that inevitably followed, and, of course, the 1917 Revolution. Compare that world to ours, in which the sovereignty of the capitalist market, under the aegis of one unchallenged superpower, has replaced older forms of imperial domination.

Consider, too, that, if today there's a longer history of national liberation and anti-imperialist struggles to look back on, there's also a much longer record of destruction and human suffering inflicted in the name of nationalism. So now more than ever, there's a lot to think and talk about here.

In this issue, we're publishing an article that challenges the analogy repeatedly invoked by NATO between the Kosovo Albanians and the Jews in the Second World War. With its legalistic argument and difficult style, it probably needs to be read more than once in order not to be misunderstood, but even then, any article that combines such hugely sensitive issues will inevitably generate strong feelings, both for and against. We can't comment here on every aspect of the argument. But because it concludes with—in fact, the whole argument leads up to—an uncompromising case against ethnic nationalism (definitely no gloves here), we thought it might be useful to put that part of the argument into some kind of context by talking about some of the historical and political contradictions that have always complicated the national question. Whether readers agree or disagree with the piece, it's hard to deny that this kind of gloves-off treatment forces us to concentrate our minds on thorny questions we might prefer to avoid but which any serious socialist has to confront.

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(continued from inside front cover)

the problem as it confronts us right now, in our own very particular historical conditions.

The conundrum of the national question obviously isn't something we can resolve, or even adequately sketch out, in these Notes. But because we're running a piece in this issue that asks us to confront this contentious question in a particularly provocative way, we thought we'd just outline some of the general problems socialists have faced in grappling with it.

Even singling out some bare essentials is hard. So much depends on specific historical conditions, and so many different kinds of social forces and political struggles have come under the rubric of "nationalism" (and, for that matter, "internationalism"). "Nationalism" can cover everything from fascism to socialist anti-imperialist struggles. But we can at least make a start with a few essential points.

In very general terms, the problem comes down to this: internationalism is a matter of fundamental principle for socialists. We'll leave aside here the questions raised by even this apparently uncontroversial proposition. (For instance, does, say, the Soviet Union sending the army into Hungary mean the same thing as Cuba sending doctors to Angola or Vietnam?) We can presumably all agree, at the very least, that an inclusive human emancipation is the goal of the socialist project, and the solidarity of working classes across ethnic and (so-called) racial boundaries is an indispensable condition of achieving that goal. We may believe that the domestic front should be the first terrain of socialist struggle, or, on the contrary, that the struggle has to move immediately on to the international stage. But either way, as socialists, we share a commitment to the universality of human emancipation and to socialist solidarity.

Measured against that basic standard, the idea of nationality, especially defined in ethnic terms, is bound to be problematic for socialists. We're not, of course, talking here about the linguistic and cultural diversity that enriches human life. The problem is rather the notion of a closed and exclusive community, in which membership is determined effectively by blood (even if the ties of "blood" are more mythical than real) and sustained by coercive force. That exclusive and divisive idea of nationality is, on the face of it, hard to square with socialist conceptions of inclusive emancipation. And, of course, the principle of nationality—even the "right" of national self-determiniation, with all its emancipatory connotations—has often served oppression and imperialism, no less than liberation, not to mention all the bloody conflicts conducted in the name of nationalism.

At the same time, in certain historical conditions, and given the prevailing social forces, national liberation struggles have forced themselves onto the socialist agenda as the most direct means of confronting an oppressive power, even if only as a transitional goal. Struggles for national self-determination or against imperialism have, of course, often been led by socialists and communists. But even when they've been led by national elites, even when the best possible outcome has been the entrenchment of a national bourgeoisie no less inclined to oppress and exploit the masses than was the defeated imperial power, socialists have found it hard to turn their backs on the mass mobilizations generated by national liberation movements. At the very least, the argument has been that socialists have to align themselves with all such liberation movements or risk losing touch with the masses.

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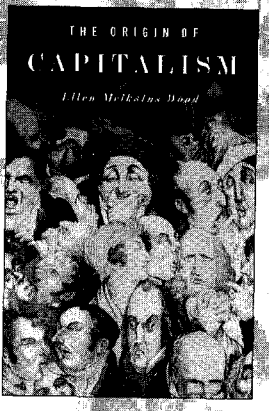

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